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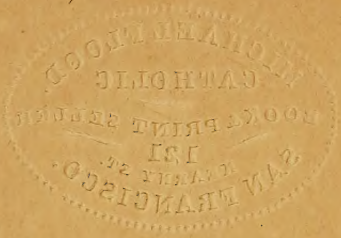


THE

MYSTERIES OF THE FAITH.

The Incarnation.

CONTAINING

MEDITATIONS, DISCOURSES, AND DEVOTIONS

ON THE BIRTH AND INFANCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

BY

ST. ALPHONSUS MARIA DE LIGUORI,

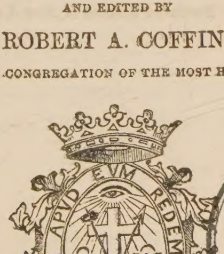
BISHOP OF ST. AGATHA, AND FOUNDER OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER.

Newly translated from the Italian,

AND EDITED BY

ROBERT A. COFFIN,

PRIEST OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER.



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RESCRIPT OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS IX.

(TRANSLATION.)

"MOST HOLY FATHER,

"The Bishop of Southwark in England, in representing to your Holiness how the Redemptorist Fathers have had the consolation to see an immense good result from the condescension with which your Holiness was pleased to praise the *German* edition of the works of St. Alphonsus, humbly begs to be authorised to bless, in the name of your Holiness, the translation already commenced, and in part published, of the pious works of St. Alphonsus *in English*.

"In an audience with his Holiness on the 13th of November, 1853, our most holy Lord, by Divine Providence, Pope Pius IX., at the request of me, the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, was graciously pleased to grant the above petition; charging, however, the conscience of the petitioner with faithfulness in the translation.

"Given at Rome, from the Palace of the Sacred Congregation, on the day and in the year as above.

"Gratis, &c. &c. AL. BARNABO, Secretary."

Imprimatur.

✠ N. CARD. WISEMAN.

Imprimatur.

✠ JOHN,
ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK.

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PREFACE.

The present volume contains all that St. Alphonsus wrote on the Incarnation and Infancy of our Blessed Lord. It is exclusively a volume of devotion and spiritual reading; and brings out in a more touching and striking manner than perhaps any of his other writings the deep, but at the same time simple and childlike, love and tenderness of the Saint.

It shows how the Saints considered and meditated upon that mystery of mysteries, the Incarnation of the Eternal Word; how they shrank not from dwelling boldly—supported as they were by the power and reality of faith—upon the wondrous consequences which that mystery involves; how they reaped from such meditation fruits which were their nourishment and support, as well in the work of their own sanctification, as in that of building up and leading to salvation the souls of others.

St. Alphonsus may be justly called the Preacher of the Infancy of Jesus in these latter times. We do not, of course, forget that there were others also especially devoted to this sweet mystery of love, among whom Father Patrignani of the Society of Jesus deserves especially to be named; but it was reserved to St. Alphonsus to put forth this devotion in the most popular way, and to bring it within reach of the capacities of all. His manner of treating it is such, that while his meditations and prayers can be used with the greatest profit by the most simple and unlearned, they cannot fail at the same time to delight even the most profound student of theology. Such a one, when he turns from the great doctors and scholastic authors who have written on the subject, and seeks refreshment and relaxation of mind in exercising the affections of

his heart upon that same mystery which erewhile had occupied and taken possession of his understanding, will be delighted to find that those very truths which he had been just now viewing mainly in an intellectual way, are put before him with all that unction and sweetness with which God inspires His Saints. He will find that, while they lose none of their vigour and reality, they at once inspire the spirit of prayer and practical devotion. And thus he will return to his studies with a keener faith, and with the intellect rendered all the more vigorous, and more capable of grasping in its full extent this Divine mystery, from its having been chastened and purified in the fire of Divine love which St. Alphonsus, with the Infant Jesus in his arms, had lit up within his soul.

In this way it would seem that the volume we now present to the reader will render invaluable service, not only to the faithful in general, as we shall presently show, but also to the theological student. It is hardly necessary to say, that the study of theology without prayer brings but little fruit. It is certain that those who have dived most deeply into the abyss of the love of God to man were men of prayer. St. Thomas, Suarez, De Lugo, and others whose treatises, especially on the Incarnation, fill us with wonder and admiration, were all men of the highest prayer; and hence that keen and piercing insight into the hidden things of God, and that fearless assertion and defence of truths which to the unbeliever and to the Christian of natural and shallow mind appear either as frivolous puerilities, or as irreverent, far-fetched, and dangerous deductions. It is for this reason that we would hope that the devotions and discourses of St. Alphonsus on the Incarnation will receive a hearty welcome from all those who are theologically engaged in the study of that mystery, and that they will find in them a most valuable means for advancing in the spirit of prayer.

To the faithful in general they cannot fail to be of the greatest service. If eternal life consists in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent; if God has become indeed very and true Man; if in all things, sin only excepted, He has made Himself like unto us; if we cannot arrive at the knowledge of the Eternal Father save through and by

His Incarnate Son,—then the knowledge of the Sacred Humanity of the Eternal Word is the most precious of all knowledge, and the consideration of the infinite mysteries which it develops to us becomes of the highest importance for our progress in the knowledge of God.

The Sacred Humanity is that mirror of mirrors, in which we see reflected and brought within reach of our limited understanding the infinite perfections and attributes of God. In that mirror we can contemplate His wisdom, His love, His mercy, His omnipotence, His unspeakable condescension to us His creatures; and through the Sacred Humanity, God, who is immeasurably removed from us when considered in His Divine essence and nature, is brought so near to us, that we can indeed exclaim that He is "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," and console ourselves with the thought that He who once seemed so far off from us, and from whom our sins had estranged us, has become through the Incarnation so one with ourselves, that we can justly claim Him as our own, and call Him, not only our Lord and our God, but our Brother and our Friend.

By meditation on the Sacred Humanity, as proposed to us by St. Alphonsus, we shall certainly arrive at a more perfect and enlarged knowledge of God. This is the way which the Saints have trod; in which they always felt secure, and free from the danger of illusions, remembering that Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life," and that "no one cometh to the Father except through Him."

St. Teresa, that great lover of Jesus, tells us from her own experience how hard it is, and even unsafe, for the generality of souls to aim at union with God through any other way.

"I have seen," she says in her *Life*,* written in obedience to her confessor, "that by this gate we must enter, if we wish His Sovereign Majesty to communicate great secrets to our souls. Thus it is that I wish your reverence not to choose any other way, though you should have arrived at the very height of contemplation; for here you will be safe, since this

* Life of Teresa, written by herself, ch. xxii. Very Rev. J. Dalton's translation.

is our Lord, from whom all blessings come: if you consider His life, your own will be improved; for He is the very best pattern we can have. What can we desire more than to have so good a Friend by our side, who will never desert us in our afflictions and tribulations, like men in the world do? Blessed is that man who loves our Lord truly, and who always has Him near to him. Let us consider the glorious St. Paul, who had the name of Jesus continually on his lips, because he had it deeply engraven in his heart. And from the time I have known this truth, I have carefully considered the lives of many other great contemplative Saints, and I have noticed that they walk along no other way. St. Francis shows this clearly by his *Wounds*, and St. Anthony of Padua by the *Infant Jesus*. St. Bernard took great delight in the Humanity of our Lord; so also did St. Catherine of Sienna, and many other saints."

But it is not only to those who are led on by Divine grace to the higher degrees of prayer, as were those favoured souls referred to by St. Teresa, that frequent meditation on the Sacred Humanity of our Lord is productive of such blessed results, but to the faithful in general it is the sure and certain way of advancing in the love of God. And if this be true with regard to the mysteries of the Passion and of the Blessed Sacrament, it is especially so of the Infancy and Hidden Life of our dear Redeemer.

He is indeed, as St. Teresa says, our pattern, and the very best: the life of every Christian must be moulded and fashioned after His; travelling along the road to eternity, his one sole thought must be to keep his eyes for ever fixed on this Divine example, "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith." In proposing, then, the Infancy of our Blessed Saviour as the mystery of His Sacred Humanity especially fitted for our meditation and example, it must not, of course, be understood that we would say that the whole life of our dear Lord, from His birth even to His death, is not to be our model, nor that we would compare mystery with mystery, or set one above the other. We must without doubt strive to imitate Him in all things, and to have His whole life continually before us; but this does not prevent its being true that certain portions of it are more beyond our feeble reach than others,

and too high, too divine, to be closely imitated by us. And if, too, as St. Teresa says, "our frail nature or our infirmities will not allow us always to be meditating on the Passion on account of its painfulness, because it is true that no one can bear always to be meditating on all the sufferings which He endured," then we can turn, as the Saint suggests, to the Blessed Sacrament, or, to come back to our present subject, to the Infancy and Hidden Life. There every moment, each single step, the slightest word, the smallest action, while they are all infinite, unfathomable mysteries, as being the words and actions of an Incarnate God, are at the same time full of practical lessons within our reach; they are examples which we can minutely follow; they will console and strengthen us in our daily life, will meet us at every step, will ever be to us the gracious and loving expressions of that Word which is "the lamp to our feet and the light to our paths."

Those who carefully study the meditations and discourses of St. Alphonsus on the Sacred Infancy will at once perceive what use he makes of even the most minute details and circumstances in the Birth and Hidden Life of our Blessed Lord. To him, as to St. Bernard and others who had written before him on this mystery, every thing connected with the Infancy of Jesus has a meaning, conveys a lesson, is a fresh motive for gratitude and love.

The time, the manner, the place of the Nativity, the cold damp cave, the manger and the straw, the breath of the animals with whom Jesus shared His resting-place, the tears and cries of the Divine Infant, the milk of His most blessed Mother, the poor rags and swaddling-clothes,—all, all is great, all is full of wonder, all is divine; it is the excess and prodigality of the love of God, the rays of that fire which burns within the Sacred Heart, and which is ever seeking to find an entrance into, and to consume, the hearts of men.

If then, dear Christian reader, thou wouldest follow in the steps of the Saints, and make good use of this treasury of grace, the Sacred Humanity of our Lord, meditate upon it as did the Saints; with St. Alphonsus as your guide, enter the cave of Bethlehem, approach the crib, and gaze on that Divine Child

who is weeping, trembling, and suffering the hardships of poverty and cold for thee.

If thou wouldest order well thy daily life, sanctify even the most ordinary actions, and turn them into merits for eternity, perform the duties of thy state in the spirit of prayer and in union with God; bid St. Alphonsus conduct thee to the cot of Nazareth, dwell there with the Holy Family, with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph; watch well the actions of that young Boy, thy Redeemer and thy God, His obedience to Mary and to Joseph, His profound humility, His divine simplicity.

Wouldest thou know how to gain heaven in the midst of daily toil, in a hidden and common life, in the round of ordinary duties, which glitter not in the eyes of men, unnoticed and unknown, saving perhaps to thyself and God; learn of Jesus as He carries water from the well, as He labours in the shop of Joseph, as He takes His share in the household duties of that Holy Family; consider Him in His prayer, His silence, His recollection, in His union with His eternal Father: and forget not that all these things were for thee; that they were all the actions of an Incarnate God, of an infinite value in the sight of the Heavenly Father, that they merited for thee whatever thou hast of grace here, whatever thou hopest for of glory hereafter.

In the cave of Bethlehem, in the house of Nazareth, thou wilt find a boundless, inexhaustible ocean of merit, satisfaction, and grace; enter, then, in with faith, draw deeply from that treasury of mercy and of love; and thus clothed with the merits of Jesus, strengthened by His grace, and with the good-will to follow His example, present thyself to His eternal Father, to repose with the Infant Jesus in the bosom of His love for time and for eternity.

One word more, and we bring these few introductory remarks to a close.

The devotion to the Infancy and Hidden Life of our dearest Lord would seem in a special manner suited to the times in which we are living. Not to enter into all that might be said upon this subject, we will briefly advert to two points suggested to us by the present volume.

If there is one thing which must strike all who meditate on the Infancy of our Lord, it is the poverty in which He chose to be born, and which He took as the inseparable companion of His whole life. Whereas if we leave the cave of Bethlehem, and look out upon the world in which our lot is cast, what do we see, but that which Jesus chose and loved become the subject of horror and disgust? Poverty is now in the eyes of the world a simple disgrace; and our poor, the chosen ones of the Heart of Jesus, are considered at best as a necessary though intolerable evil; and to relieve them, or provide means for their permanent support, is done rather in the spirit of removing an object which disgusts and annoys the sight, than in that of Christian charity and devotion to the Person of our Lord in His distressed and suffering members. How different are the thoughts of one who has made himself familiar with the cave of Bethlehem and the holy house of Nazareth! How will he not, after meditating on the poverty of Jesus, on the cold and suffering of that first Christmas night, on the thirty years of hardship and of toil,—how will he not feel his heart moved more and more with compassion and tenderness for the poor of Jesus! What care will he not take, lest from living in the world he become himself but ever so slightly infected by its spirit; what devotion and readiness will he not show to assist and co-operate, as far as it is in his power, in all the works of mercy, corporal and spiritual—and especially in the latter, in which the faithful children of the Church are ever, and particularly at the present time, so zealously and unselfishly engaged!

The second point suggested by the Infancy of our Lord, which, in conclusion, we will just touch upon, is this. We live in an age of untiring activity, in an age which measures success by immediate, visible, and palpable results, in which no sooner is a work begun than men are at once impatient to see its completion. The world cannot bear to work step by step, to watch the proper place, and time, and occasion, for its designs: all must be done at once; to begin and finish must be, were it possible, simultaneous; calmly to wait and let things maturely grow, is considered a sign of weakness, is in itself a failure. The patience, and forbearance, and gentle providence of God, is forgotten; neither do men remember how

even Wisdom itself, though "she reacheth from end to end mightily," yet "ordereth all things sweetly."

Would we learn to be patient as God is patient, to order things as He does sweetly, to be content with the knowledge that, when we have done our best, whether in the work of our own sanctification or in our efforts for the good and salvation of others, we must after all wait patiently, and hope and pray, leaving the result to the good providence of God: would we cherish hidden ways, and humble unpretending aims, and rest satisfied that we are only allowed to plant and sow, while it is for others to reap the fruits of our labours;—then let us try to live with Jesus in His Hidden Life, and not be over-anxious to see the results and success even of our purest undertakings; for God Himself, after having waited four thousand years to redeem mankind, thought it not too long to wait even yet a period of thirty more, before He accomplished that work of love for which He had expressly come into the world.

And now, dear reader, farewell. We leave thee with Mary, Joseph, and Alphonsus, in the cave of Bethlehem; mayest thou love to dwell there, and learn of Jesus the virtues of His Sacred Infancy, and the art of dying to thyself, that thou mayest live to Him.

"What can the world profit thee without Jesus?

"To be without Jesus is a grievous hell; and to be with Jesus a sweet paradise.

"It is a great art to know how to converse with Jesus, and to know how to keep Jesus is great wisdom.

"Stand, then, with an even mind resigned to the will of God, and bear for the glory of God whatever shall befal thee: because after winter comes summer; after the night the day returns; after a storm there follows a great calm." (*Imitation*, book ii. c. viii.)

ROBERT ASTON COFFIN, C.SS.R.

St. Mary's, Clapham,
Sept. 30, 1854.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

EIGHT MEDITATIONS ON THE GREAT MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION OF THE ETERNAL WORD, FOR THE FIRST EIGHT DAYS OF ADVENT 1

MEDITATIONS FOR THE FIRST DAYS OF ADVENT TILL THE NOVENA OF CHRISTMAS 12

MEDITATIONS FOR THE NOVENA FOR CHRISTMAS 48

ANOTHER NOVENA FOR CHRISTMAS 68

MED. I. On the love of God in becoming man 69
II. On the love of God in being born an infant 71
III. On the life of poverty which Jesus led even from His birth 73
IV. On the life of humility which Jesus led even from His infancy 70
V. On the life of sorrow which Jesus led even from His birth . 75
VI. On the mercy of God in coming down from heaven to save us by His death 76
VII. On the journey of the Infant Jesus into Egypt 77
VIII. On the sojourn of the Infant Jesus in Egypt and in Nazareth 79
IX. On the birth of the Infant Jesus in the cave of Bethlehem 80

Meditations for the Octave of the Nativity,

AND FOR THE FOLLOWING DAYS UNTIL THE EPIPHANY.

MED. I. On the birth of Jesus 82
II. Jesus is born an infant 84
III. Jesus in swaddling-clothes 86
IV. On Jesus taking milk 89

PAGE

MED. V. Jesus lying on the straw 91
VI. Jesus sleeping 93
VII. Jesus weeping 95
VIII. On the Name of Jesus 97
IX. On the solitude of Jesus in the stable 99
X. On the occupations of the Infant Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem 101
XI. On the poverty of the Infant Jesus 103

Meditations for the Octave of the Epiphany.

MED. I. The adoration of the Magi 106
II. On the presentation of Jesus in the Temple . . . 108
III. On the flight of Jesus into Egypt 109
IV. On the dwelling of Jesus in Egypt 111
V. On the return of Jesus from Egypt 114
VI. On the dwelling of Jesus in Nazareth 116
VII. The same subject continued 117
VIII. On the loss of Jesus in the Temple 119

Another Meditation for the Feast of the Circumcision . . . 122
——— Epiphany 123
——— Sacred Name of Jesus . 124

Discourses for the Novena of Christmas.

DISC. I. The Eternal Word is made Man 126
II. The Eternal Word from being great made Himself little . 140
III. The Eternal Word from being Lord made Himself a servant 150
IV. The Eternal Word from being innocent made Himself guilty 159
V. The Eternal Word from being strong made Himself weak 170
VI. The Eternal Word from being His own made Himself ours 179
VII. The Eternal Word from being happy made Himself afflicted 188
VIII. The Eternal Word from being rich made Himself poor . 199

PAGE
Disc. IX. The Eternal Word from being high made Himself low . 209
X. On the birth of Jesus Christ, for Christmas Night . . 219
XI. On the Name of Jesus 227

Examples of the Infant Jesus 238
The Way of Bethlehem, or Stations of the Infant Jesus . 245

Appendix 261

EIGHT MEDITATIONS

UPON THE GREAT MYSTERY

OF

THE INCARNATION OF THE ETERNAL WORD,

TO BE MADE IN THE FIRST EIGHT DAYS OF ADVENT, BEGINNING WITH THE FIRST SUNDAY.

Meditation I.

I. "And the Word was made flesh" (St. John i. 14). God has created us to love Him in this life, and afterwards to enjoy Him in the next; but we ungratefully rebelled against God by sinning, and refused to obey Him, and therefore we have been deprived of Divine grace, and excluded from Paradise, and besides condemned to the eternal pains of hell. Behold us, therefore, all lost; but this God, moved by compassion for us, resolved to send on earth a Redeemer, who should repair our great ruin.

II. But who shall this Redeemer be? Shall it be an angel, or a seraph? No; to show us the immense love that He bears us, God sends us His own Son: "God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). He sent his only begotten Son to clothe Himself with the same flesh as we sinners, but without the stain of sin; and He willed that by His sufferings and His death He should satisfy the Divine justice for our crimes, and should thus deliver us from eternal death, and render us worthy of Divine grace and eternal glory. I thank Thee, O my

God, on behalf of all mankind ; for, if Thou hadst not thought of saving us, I and all the world would have been lost for ever.

III. Let us dwell here on the infinite love which our God has shown for us in this great work of the Incarnation of the Word, ordaining that His Son should come and sacrifice His life upon the Cross by the hands of executioners, in a sea of sorrows and of shame, to obtain for us pardon and eternal salvation. Oh, infinite goodness ! Oh, infinite mercy ! Oh, infinite love ! A God to become man and die for us, poor worms ! I beseech Thee, my Saviour, make me know how much Thou hast loved me, in order that, at the sight of Thy loving-kindness, I may discover my own ingratitude. Thou hast delivered me by Thy death from perdition ; and I, ungrateful that I am, have turned my back upon Thee, to ruin myself again ! I repent with all my heart of having done Thee this great injury. O my Saviour, forgive me, and save me in future from sin ; do not suffer me again to lose Thy grace. I love Thee, O my dear Jesus ; Thou art my hope and my love ! O Mary, Mother of this great Son, recommend to Him my soul !

Meditation II.

I. "And became incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary ; and was made man." God created Adam, and enriched him with gifts ; but man, ungrateful, offended Him by sinning, and thus both he and all we his descendants remained deprived of Divine grace and Paradise. Thus, then, all mankind was lost and without a remedy. Man had offended God, and therefore was incapable of giving Him an adequate satisfaction ; it was necessary then that a Divine person should satisfy for man. What does the eternal Father to save lost man ? He sent this same Son to become man, and clothe Himself with the same flesh as sinful men, in order that by His death He might pay their debts to Divine justice, and thus obtain for them a restoration to Divine grace. O my God, if Thy infinite bounty had not discovered this remedy, who of us could ever have asked it, or even imagined it ?

II. O God, what a subject of wonder must not this great love which God showed to rebellious man have been to the angels! What must they have said when they saw the eternal Word become man, and assume the same flesh as sinful man, insomuch that this Word incarnate appeared to the whole world in the form of a sinful man, as were all others. O my Jesus, how much do we not owe Thee, and how much more than others am I not indebted to Thee, who have offended Thee so much more than others! If Thou hadst not come to save me, what would have become of me for all eternity? Who could have saved me from the pains that I deserve? Mayest Thou be ever blessed and praised for such great love!

III. Thus, then, the Son of God comes from heaven on earth, and becomes man: He comes to live a life of suffering; He comes to die upon the cross for the love of man; and shall men who believe all this love any other object besides this incarnate God? O Jesus my Saviour, I will love none other but Thee; Thou alone hast loved me, Thee alone will I love. I renounce all created goods; Thou alone art sufficient for me, O immense and infinite Good! If hitherto I have displeased Thee, I am now heartily sorry for it, and would wish that this sorrow might make me die, to compensate in some measure for the displeasure I have caused Thee. Oh, permit me not in future to be ever again ungrateful for the love Thou hast borne me. No, my Jesus, make me to love Thee, and then treat me as Thou pleasest. O infinite Bounty, O infinite Love, I will only live henceforth to love Thee! O Mary, Mother of mercy, this one favour I ask of thee, obtain for me the grace of always, always loving God.

Meditation III.

I. Consider, my soul, how the eternal Father, in giving us His beloved Son for our Redeemer, could have given us no stronger motives for confiding in His mercy and loving His infinite bounty; for He could have given us no more certain token of the desire He has for our good, and of the immense love which He bears us, inasmuch as in giving us

His Son, He has nothing left to give us. Let all men, therefore, O eternal God, praise Thy infinite charity.

II. "How hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) Since God has given us His Son, whom He loved as Himself, how can we fear that He will deny us any other good that we ask of Him? If, therefore, He has given us His Son, He will not refuse us pardon for the offences which we have committed against Him, provided we detest them; He will not refuse us the grace to resist temptations, if we implore it of Him; He will not refuse us His holy love, if we desire it; He will not, finally, refuse us Paradise, if we do not render ourselves unworthy of it by falling into sin. Behold how Jesus Himself assures us of this: "If you ask the Father any thing in My name, He will give it you" (St. John xvi. 23). Encouraged, therefore, O my God, by this promise, I beg of Thee, for the love of Jesus Thy Son, to pardon me all the injuries that I have done Thee; give me holy perseverance in Thy grace until death; give me Thy holy love; may I detach myself from every thing to love Thee alone, O infinite Goodness; give me Paradise in order that I may come and love Thee there with all my strength, and for ever, without fear of ever ceasing to love Thee.

III. In a word, the apostle says, that having obtained Jesus Christ, we have been enriched with every good, so that there is no grace wanting to us: "In all things you are made rich in Him . . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace" (1 Cor. i. 5, 7). Yes, my Jesus, Thou art every good; Thou alone sufficest me; for Thee alone do I sigh; if once I drove Thee away from me by my sins, I repent of it now with my whole heart. Forgive me, and return to me, O Lord; and if Thou art already with me, as I hope, leave me not again, or rather, suffer me not to drive Thee away from my soul again. My Jesus, my Jesus, my Treasure, my Love, my All, I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee, and will love Thee for ever. O Mary, my hope, make me always to love Jesus.

Meditation IV.

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent His Son" (Gal. iv. 4). How thankful should we not be to Almighty God for having caused us to be born after the great work of man's redemption was accomplished! This is what is meant by 'the fulness of time,' a time blessed by the fulness of grace, which Jesus Christ obtained for us by coming into the world. Miserable should we have been if, guilty as we are of manifold sins, we had lived on this earth before the coming of Jesus Christ.

II. Oh, what a miserable state were all men in before the coming of the Messias; the true God was hardly known even in Judea, and in every other part of the world idolatry reigned, so that our forefathers worshipped stones, and wood, and devils; they worshipped innumerable false gods, but the true God was neither loved nor known by them; even now, how many countries are there in which there are scarcely any Catholics, and all the rest of the inhabitants are either infidels or heretics, and all these are certainly in the way to be lost. What obligation do we not owe to God for causing us to be born, not only after the coming of Jesus Christ, but also in countries where the true faith reigns: I thank Thee, O Lord, for it. Woe to me, if, after so many transgressions, it had been my lot to live in the midst of infidels or heretics! I know, O my God, that Thou willest that I should be saved; and I, miserable wretch, have willed so many times to damn myself by losing Thy favour. Have pity, my Blessed Redeemer, on my soul, which has cost Thee so much.

III. "God sent His Son, that He might redeem them that were under the law" (Gal. iv. 4). The slave therefore sins, and by sinning gives himself into the power of the devil, and his own Lord comes and ransoms him by His death. O immense love, O infinite love of God towards man! O my Saviour, if Thou hadst not redeemed me by Thy death, what would have become of me? Of me, who so many times have deserved hell by my sins.

Oh, if Thou, my Jesus, hadst not died for me, I should have lost Thee for ever, and there would have been no hope for me of recovering Thy grace, or of seeing Thy beautiful face in Paradise. My dearest Saviour, I thank Thee; and I hope to come to heaven, there to thank Thee for all eternity. I regret above every evil that of having despised Thee in times past. In future, I purpose to choose every trouble, every kind of death, rather than offend Thee. I beseech Thee, my Jesus, let me never do so; 'never let me be separated from Thee, never let me be separated from Thee.' I love Thee, O infinite Goodness, and I will always love Thee in this life, and in all eternity. O my queen and advocate, Mary, keep me always under thy protection, and deliver me from sin.

Meditation V.

I. "He loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). If, therefore, my Jesus, Thou hast for love of me embraced a laborious life and a bitter death, I may, indeed, say that Thy death is mine, Thy sufferings are mine, Thy merits are mine, Thou Thyself art mine; since for me Thou hast given Thyself up to such great sufferings. Ah, my Jesus, there is no trouble that afflicts me more than the thought that once Thou wert mine, and that I have so often willingly lost Thee. Forgive me, and unite me to Thyself; suffer me not in future ever to offend Thee again. I love Thee with all my heart. Thou willest to be all mine; and I will be entirely Thine.

II. The Son of God being true God is infinitely happy; and yet, as St. Thomas says, He has done and suffered as much for man as if He could not be happy without him. If Jesus Christ had been obliged to earn for Himself upon this earth His eternal beatitude, what could He have done more, than to burden Himself with all our weaknesses, and assume all our infirmities, and then end His life with a death so severe and ignominious? But no, He was innocent, He was holy, and was in Himself blessed; whatever He did and suffered was all to gain for us Divine grace and Paradise, which we had lost. Miserable is he that

does not love Thee, my Jesus, and that does not pass his life enamoured with so much goodness.

III. If Jesus Christ had permitted us to ask Him for the greatest proofs of His love, who would have dared to propose to Him to become a child like one of us, to embrace all our miseries, to make Himself of all men the most poor, the most despised, the most ill-used, even to dying in torments the infamous death of the Cross, cursed and forsaken by all, even by His own Father? But that which we should not have dared even to think of, He has both thought of and done. My beloved Redeemer, I beseech Thee to obtain for me that grace which Thou hast merited for me by Thy death. I love Thee, and am sorry for having offended Thee. Oh, take my soul into Thy hands; I will not let the devil have dominion over it any more; I desire that it may be entirely Thine, since Thou hast bought it with Thy blood. Thou alone lovest me, and Thee alone will I love. Deliver me from the misery of living without Thy love, and then chastise me as Thou willest. O Mary, my refuge, the death of Jesus and thy intercession are my hopes.

Meditation VI.

I. "My sorrow is continually before me" (Ps. xxxvii. 18). All the afflictions and ignominies which Jesus Christ suffered in life and death, all were present to His mind from the first moment of His life: 'Dolor meus in conspectu meo semper;' and He offered them all every moment of His life in satisfaction for our sins. Our Lord revealed to one of His servants that every sin of men gave Him during His life so much sorrow, that it would have sufficed to cause His death, if His life had not been preserved in order that He might suffer more. Behold, O my Jesus, what gratitude hast Thou received from men, and especially from me. Thou hast spent thirty-three years of life for my salvation, and I have done as much as I could, as far as it depended on me, to make Thee die with sorrow, as often as I have committed sin.

II. St. Bernardine of Sienna writes, that Jesus Christ

'had a particular regard to every single sin.' Each of our sins was present continually to our Saviour, even from His infancy, and afflicted Him grievously. St. Thomas adds,[1] that this one sorrow of knowing all the injury which resulted to the Father from every sin, and all the evil which it occasioned to us, surpassed the sorrow of all the contrite sinners that ever were, even of those who died of pure contrition; because no sinner ever arrived at loving God and his own soul as Jesus Christ has loved the Father and our souls. Therefore, my Jesus, if no man ever loved me more than Thou hast done, it is only just that I should love Thee above all men. Since, then, I can say that Thou alone hast really loved me, so will I love Thee alone.

III. That agony which Jesus suffered in the garden at the sight of our sins, for which He had taken upon Himself to satisfy, He suffered from the time He was conceived in His mother's womb. If, therefore, Jesus Christ passed a life full of tribulations for no other reason than on account of our sins, we ought not, during our life, to afflict ourselves for any other evils than for the sins which we have committed. My beloved Redeemer, I could wish to die of sorrow at the thought of all the bitterness I have caused Thee during my life. My Love, if Thou lovest me, give me such a sorrow as may take away my life, and so obtain for me Thy pardon, and the grace to love Thee with all my strength. I give Thee my whole heart; and if I do not know how to give it Thee entirely, oh, do Thou take it Thyself, and inflame it with Thy holy love. O Mary, advocate of the wretched, I recommend myself to thee.

Meditation VII.

I. "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" (St. Luke xii. 50.) Jesus could have saved us without suffering; but He chose rather to embrace a life of sorrow and contempt, deprived of every earthly consolation, and a death of bitterness and desolation, only to make us understand the love which He bore us, and the desire which He had that we should love Him. He passed His whole life

in sighing for the hour of His death, which He desired to offer to God, to obtain for us eternal salvation. And it was this desire which made Him exclaim : "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" He desired to be baptised in His own blood, to wash out, not, indeed, His own, but our sins. Oh, infinite Love, how miserable is he who does not know Thee, and does not love Thee!

II. This same desire caused Him to say, on the night before His death, "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you" (St. Luke xxii. 15). By which words He shows that His only desire during His whole life had been to see the time arrive for His passion and death, in order to prove to man the immense love which He bore him. So much, therefore, O my Jesus, didst Thou desire our love, that to obtain it Thou didst not refuse to die. How could I then deny any thing to a God who, for love of me, has given His blood and His life?

III. St. Bonaventure says, that it is a wonder to see a God suffering for the love of men; but that it is a still greater wonder that men should behold a God suffering so much for them, shivering with cold as an infant in a manger, living as a poor boy in a shop, dying as a criminal on a cross, and yet not burn with love to this most loving God; but even go so far as to despise this love, for the sake of the miserable pleasures of this earth. But how is it possible that God should be so enamoured with men, and that men, who are so grateful to one another, should be so ungrateful to God? Alas! my Jesus, I find myself also among the number of these ungrateful ones. Tell me, how couldest Thou suffer so much for me, knowing the injuries that I should commit against Thee? But since Thou hast borne with me, and even desirest my salvation, give me, I pray Thee, a great sorrow for my sins, a sorrow equal to my ingratitude. I hate and detest, above all things, my Lord, the displeasure which I have caused Thee. If, during my past life, I have despised Thy grace, now I value it above all the kingdoms of the earth. I love Thee with my whole soul, O God, worthy of infinite love, and I desire only to live in order to love Thee. Increase the

flames of Thy love, and give me more and more love. Keep alive in my remembrance the love Thou hast borne me, so that my heart may always burn with love for Thee, as Thy heart burns with love for me. Oh, burning heart of Mary, inflame my poor heart with holy love.

Meditation VIII.

"You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains" (Is. xii. 3). We have three fountains of grace in Jesus Christ. The first is the fountain of *mercy*, in which we may purify ourselves from all the filth of our sins. For this end did our blessed Redeemer form, for our good, this fountain out of His own blood.

"He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Apoc. i. 5). My dearest Saviour, how much do I owe Thee! Thou hast done for me what no servant would have done for his master, and no son for his father. No, I cannot cease to love Thee; for Thou hast, by Thy love, entailed on me the necessity of loving Thee.

II. The second fountain is that of *love*. He that meditates on the sufferings and degradations undergone by Jesus Christ, for the love of us, from His birth even until His death, must of necessity feel himself inflamed with that blessed fire which He came on earth to enkindle in the hearts of men. Thus it is that the waters of this fountain wash, and at the same time inflame, our souls. Grant, therefore, O my Jesus, that the blood which Thou hast shed for me may not only wash away all the sins which I have committed against Thee, but may also inflame me with holy ardour towards Thee. Make me forget every thing, so that I may be intent only on loving Thee, my God, who art worthy of infinite love.

III. The third fountain is that of *peace*. This is what Jesus Christ meant when He said, "If any man thirst, let him come to Me" (St. John vii. 37). He that desireth peace of mind, let him come to Me, who am the God of peace. The peace which the Lord gives to the souls that love Him, is not the peace which the world promises in the pleasures of sense, or in temporal goods, which do not sa-

tisfy the heart of man. The peace which God gives to His servants is true peace, perfect peace, which satisfies the heart, and surpasses all the enjoyments that creatures can afford. "But he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever" (St. John iv. 13). He that truly loves God leaves every thing, despises every thing, and seeks nothing but God. 'Yes, my God, I desire Thee alone, and nothing else.' There was, indeed, a time when I sought for other goods besides Thee; but when I think of the injustice which I have done Thee, in preferring such vile and fleeting goods to Thee, I am ready to die of sorrow. I acknowledge the sin I have committed, and I grieve for it with my whole heart. I acknowledge also that Thou art worthy of all my love; and therefore I repeat, and hope always to repeat in this life and in the next, 'My God, my God, I desire Thee alone, and nothing more; I desire Thee alone, and nothing more.' O Mary, thou wert the first lover of this God; oh, make me partake in thy love.

MEDITATIONS

FOR THE FIRST DAYS OF ADVENT TILL THE NOVENA OF CHRISTMAS.

Meditation I.

"And was incarnate of the Holy Ghost, and was made man."

Consider how that God, having created the first man, in order that he might serve Him and love Him in this life, and be conducted afterwards to reign with Him for ever in Paradise, enriched him for this end with knowledge and grace. But ungrateful man rebelled against God, refusing Him the obedience which he owed Him in justice and gratitude; and thus, miserable sinner, was he left with all his posterity as a rebel, deprived of Divine grace, and for ever excluded from Paradise. Behold, then, after this ruin, caused by sin, all men lost! All were living in blindness, or in the darkness of the shadow of death. The devil had dominion over them, and hell destroyed innumerable victims amongst them. But God, seeing men reduced to this miserable state, was moved with pity, and resolved to save them. And how? He did not send an angel, a seraph; but to show to the world the immense love that He bore to these ungrateful worms, "He sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). He sent His own Son to become man, and to clothe Himself with the same flesh as sinful men, in order that, by His sufferings and death, He might satisfy the Divine justice for their crimes, and thus deliver them from eternal death; and reconciling them with His Divine Father, might obtain for them Divine grace, and might render them worthy to enter into life eternal. Here consider, on the one hand, the immense ruin that sin brings upon souls, as it deprives

them of the friendship of God and of Paradise, and condemns them to an eternity of pain. And, on the other hand, consider the infinite love which God showed in this great work of the incarnation of the Word, causing His only-begotten Son to sacrifice His Divine life by the hands of executioners on a cross, in a sea of sorrows and of infamy, to obtain for us pardon and life eternal. Oh, in contemplating this great mystery and this excess of Divine love, how can we do otherwise than exclaim: Oh, infinite goodness! Oh, infinite mercy! Oh, infinite love! for a God to become man, and to die for me!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

But how is it, my Jesus, that after Thou hast repaired this ruin of sin by Thy own death, I have so often wilfully renewed it again by the many offences I have committed against Thee? Thou hast saved me at so great a cost, and I have so often chosen to damn myself, in losing Thee, O infinite Good! But what Thou hast said gives me confidence, that when the sinner who has turned his back upon Thee is converted to Thee, Thou wilt not refuse to embrace him: "Turn ye to Me, and I will turn to you" (Zach. i. 3). Thou hast also said: "If any man shall . . . open to Me the door, I will come in to him" (Apoc. iii. 20). Behold, Lord, I am one of these rebels, an ungrateful traitor, who have often turned my back upon Thee, and driven Thee from my soul; but now I repent with all my heart for having thus ill-used Thee and despised Thy grace; I repent of it, and love Thee above every thing. Behold, the door of my heart is already open; enter Thou in, but enter never to leave it again. I know well that Thou wilt never leave me, if I do not again drive Thee away; but this is my fear, and this is the grace which I ask of Thee, and which I hope always to ask; let me die rather than be guilty of this fresh and still greater ingratitude. My dearest Redeemer, I do not deserve to love Thee, after all the offences I have committed against Thee; but for Thy own merits' sake I ask of Thee the gift of Thy holy love, and therefore I beseech Thee make me know the great good Thou art,

the love Thou hast borne me, and how much Thou hast done to oblige me to love Thee. Ah, my God and Saviour, let me no longer live ungrateful to Thy great goodness. My Jesus, I will never leave Thee again; I have already offended Thee enough. It is only right that I should employ the remaining years of my life in loving Thee and pleasing Thee. My Jesus, my Jesus, help me; help a sinner that wishes to love Thee. O Mary, my Mother, thou hast all power with Jesus, seeing thou art His Mother; beg of Him to forgive me; beg of Him to enchain me with His holy love. Thou art my hope; in thee do I confide.

Meditation II.

"And the Word was made flesh."—*St. John* i. 14.

Our Lord sent St. Augustine to write upon the heart of St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi the words, 'Verbum caro factum est.' Oh, let us also pray the Lord to enlighten our minds, and to make us understand what an excess and what a miracle of love this is, that the eternal Word, the Son of God, should have become man for the love of us. The holy Church is struck with awe at the contemplation of this great mystery: "I considered Thy works, and was afraid." (Resp. iii.; Nocturn. ii.; in fest. Circumc.) If God had created a thousand other worlds, a thousand times greater and more beautiful than the present, it is certain that this work would be infinitely less grand than the incarnation of the Word: "He hath showed might in His arm." To execute the great work of the Incarnation, it required all the omnipotence and infinite wisdom of God, in order to unite human nature to a Divine person, and that a Divine person should so humble Himself as to take upon Him human nature; thus God became man, and man became God; and hence, the divinity of the Word being united to the soul and body of Jesus Christ, all the actions of this Man-God became divine; His prayers were divine, His sufferings divine, His infant cries divine, His tears divine, His steps divine, His members divine, His very blood divine, which became as it were a fountain of health to wash out all our sins, and a sacrifice of infinite value to

appease the justice of the Father, who was justly offended with men. And who then are these men? miserable, ungrateful, and rebellious creatures. And yet for these God becomes man; subjects Himself to human miseries; suffers and dies to save these unworthy sinners: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). Oh, holy faith! If faith did not assure us of it, who would believe that a God of infinite majesty should abase Himself so far as to become a worm like us, in order to save us at the cost of so much suffering and disgrace, and of such a cruel and shameful death? 'Oh, grace! oh, power of love!' cries St. Bernard. Oh, grace, which men could not even have imagined, if God Himself had not thought of granting it to us! Oh, divine love, which can never be fathomed! Oh, mercy! Oh, infinite charity, worthy only of an infinite bounty!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O soul, O body, O blood of my Jesus, I adore you and thank you; you are my hope; you are the price paid to save me from hell, which I have so often merited. Oh, my God, what a miserable and hopeless life would await me in eternity, if Thou, my Redeemer, hadst not thought of saving me by Thy sufferings and death! But how is it that souls, redeemed by Thee with so much love, knowing all this, can live without loving Thee, and can despise the grace which Thou hast acquired for them with so much suffering? And did not I also know all this? How, then, could I offend Thee, and offend Thee so often? But I repeat it, Thy blood is my hope. I acknowledge, my Saviour, the great injuries that I have done to Thee. Oh, that I had rather died a thousand times! Oh, that I had always loved Thee! But I thank Thee that Thou yet givest me time to do so. I hope in the time that remains to me in this life, and for all eternity, to sing for ever Thy praises for the mercies Thou hast shown me. I have deserved, on account of my sins, to be more and more in darkness; but Thou hast given me more and more light. I deserved that Thou shouldst abandon me; but Thou,

with calls still more loving, didst come to me and seek me. I deserved that my soul should remain more hardened; but Thou hast softened and touched it with compunction, so that by Thy grace I now feel great sorrow for the offences I have committed against Thee; I feel within me an ardent desire of loving Thee; I feel fully resolved to lose every thing rather than Thy friendship; I feel a love towards Thee that makes me abhor every thing that displeases Thee. And this sorrow, this desire, this resolution, and this love, who is it that gives them to me? It is Thou, O Lord, in Thy great mercy. Therefore, my Jesus, this is a proof that Thou hast pardoned me; it is a proof that Thou now lovest me, and that Thou willest me at all costs to be saved; Thou willest that I should be saved, and I will save myself principally to give Thee pleasure. Thou lovest me, and I also love Thee; but my love is but little. Oh, give me more love; Thou deservest more love from me, for I have received from Thee more special favours than others; I pray Thee, do Thou increase the flames of my love. Most holy Mary, obtain for me that the love of Jesus may consume and destroy in me every affection that has not God for its object. Thou dost listen to the prayers of all that call on thee; listen to me also, obtain for me love and perseverance.

Meditation III.

"God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son."—*St. John* iii. 16.

Consider how that the eternal Father, in giving us His Son for a Redeemer, for victim and price of our ransom, could not have given us stronger motives for hope and love, to inspire us with confidence, and to oblige us to love Him. In giving us His Son (says St. Augustine), He could give us nothing more. He desires that we should avail ourselves of this immense gift in order to gain for ourselves eternal salvation, and every grace that we want; whilst in Jesus we find all that we can desire; we find light, strength, peace, confidence, love, and eternal glory; for Jesus Christ is a gift which contains all the gifts that

we can seek for or desire: "How hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) God having given us His beloved only-begotten Son, who is the fountain and treasure of all good, who need fear that He should deny us any favour that we ask of Him? "Christ Jesus is of God made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). God hath given Him to us in order that He might be to us ignorant and blind creatures light and wisdom, wherewith to walk in the way of salvation; in order that to us who are deserving of hell He might be justice, enabling us to aspire to Paradise; that to us sinners He might be sanctification, to obtain for us holiness; that, finally, to us slaves of the devil He might be a ransom to purchase for us the liberty of the sons of God. In short, the apostle says, that with Jesus Christ we have been enriched with every good gift and every grace, if we ask it through His merits: "In all things you are made rich in Him, . . . so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace" (1 Cor. v. 7). And this gift which God has made us of His Son is a gift to each one of us; for He hath given Him entirely to each of us, as if He had given Him to each one alone, so that every one of us may say: Jesus is all mine; His body is mine; His blood is mine; His life is mine; His sorrows, His death, His merits, are all mine. Wherefore St. Paul said, "He loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). And every one may say the same thing: 'My Redeemer has loved me; and for the love that He bore me He hath given Himself entirely to me.'

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O eternal God, who could ever have given us this treasure of infinite value, but Thou, who art a God of infinite love? O my Creator, what more couldst Thou have done to give us confidence in Thy mercy, and to put us under an obligation of loving Thee? O Lord, I have repaid Thee with ingratitude; but Thou hast said, "To them that love God all things work together unto good" (Rom. viii. 28). Therefore, notwithstanding the great number and the enormity of my sins, I will not despair of Thy bounty;

rather let my transgressions serve to humble me the more whenever I meet with any insult; other insults and humiliations does he deserve who has had the temerity to offend Thy Divine majesty. I wish that my sins may serve to reconcile me the more to the crosses which Thou shalt send me, that I may be more diligent to serve and honour Thee, in order to compensate for the injuries I have committed against Thee. O my God, I will always remember the displeasure I have caused Thee, in order that I may the more exalt Thy mercy, and be inflamed with love for Thee, who hast brought me back when I was flying from Thee, and who hast done me so much good after I had behaved so ill to Thee. I trust, O Lord, that Thou hast already forgiven me. I repent, and will always repent, of the outrages I have committed against Thee. I will endeavour to please Thee by making compensation by my love for the ingratitude I have shown Thee; but I depend upon Thee to help me; from Thee I hope to obtain the grace to fulfil this my desire. O my God, for Thy glory's sake, vouchsafe to grant that, as I have offended Thee much, I may also love Thee much. My God, my God, how can I ever leave off loving Thee, and separate myself again from Thy love! O Mary, my queen, do thou assist me; thou knowest my weakness; grant that I may have recourse to thee whenever the devil tries to separate me from God. My Mother, my hope, do thou help me.

Meditation IV.

"When the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son."—*Gal.* iv. 4.

Consider how that God allowed four thousand years to pass, after the transgression of Adam, before He sent His Son upon earth to redeem the world. And in the mean time, oh, what fatal darkness reigned upon the earth! The true God was not known or adored, except in one small corner of the world. Idolatry reigned every where; so that devils and beasts and stones were adored as gods. But let us admire in this the Divine Wisdom: He deferred the coming of the Redeemer in order to render

His advent more welcome to man, in order that the malice of sin might be better known, as well as the necessity of a remedy and the grace of the Saviour. If Jesus Christ had come into the world immediately after the fall of Adam, the greatness of this favour would have been but slightly appreciated. Let us therefore thank the goodness of God for having sent us into the world after the great work of redemption was accomplished. Behold the happy time is come which was called the fulness of time: "When the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son, ... that He might redeem them that were under the law." It is called *fulness*, on account of the fulness of grace which the Son of God came to communicate to men by the redemption of the world. Behold the angel who is sent as ambassador into the town of Nazareth to announce to the Virgin Mary the coming of the Word, who desires to become incarnate in her womb. The angel salutes her, calls her full of grace and blessed among women. The humble Virgin, chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, is troubled at these praises on account of her great humility: but the angel encourages her, and tells her that she has found grace with God; that is to say, that grace which brought peace between God and man, and the reparation of the ruin caused by sin. He then tells her that she must give her Son the name of Saviour: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus;"—and that this her Son is the very Son of God, who is to redeem the world, and thus to reign over the hearts of men. Behold, at last Mary consents to be the Mother of such a Son: "Be it unto me according to Thy word." And the eternal Word takes flesh and becomes man: "And the Word was made flesh." Let us thank this Son, and let us also thank His Mother, who, in consenting to be the Mother of such a Son, consented also to be the Mother of our salvation, and Mother also of sorrows, accepting at that time the deep abyss of sorrows that it would cost her to be the Mother of a Son who was to come into the world to suffer and die for man.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O Divine Word, become man for me, though I behold Thee thus humbled and become a little infant in the womb of Mary, yet I confess and acknowledge Thee for my Lord and King, but a king of love. My dearest Saviour, since Thou hast come down upon earth and clothed Thyself with our miserable flesh, in order to reign over our hearts, I beseech Thee come and establish Thy reign in my heart also, which was once, alas, ruled over by Thine enemies, but is now, I hope, Thine, as I desire that it may be always Thine, and that from this day forth Thou mayest be its only Lord: "Rule Thou in the midst of Thy enemies" (Ps. cix. 2). Other kings reign by the strength of arms, but Thou comest to reign by the power of love; and therefore Thou dost not come with regal pomp, nor clothed in purple and gold, nor adorned with sceptre and crown, nor surrounded by armies of soldiers. Thou comest into the world to be born in a stable,—poor, forsaken, placed in a manger on a little straw, because thus Thou wouldst begin to reign in our hearts. Ah, my infant King, how could I so often rebel against Thee, and live so long Thy enemy, deprived of Thy grace, when, to oblige me to love Thee, Thou hast put off Thy Divine majesty, and hast humbled Thyself even to appearing, first, as a baby in a cave; then as a servant in a shop; then as a criminal on a cross? Oh, happy me, if now that I have been freed (as I hope) from the slavery of Satan, I allow myself for ever to be governed by Thee and by Thy love! O Jesus, my King, who art so amiable and so loving to our souls, take possession, I pray Thee, of mine; I give it entirely to Thee; accept it, that it may serve Thee for ever, but serve Thee only for love. Thy majesty deserves to be feared, but Thy goodness still more deserves to be loved. Thou art my King, and shalt be always the only object of my love; and the only fear I shall have will be the fear of displeasing Thee. This is what I hope. Do Thou help me with Thy grace. O Mary, our dear Lady, it is for thee to obtain for me that I may be faithful to this beloved King of my soul.

Meditation V.

"Taking the form of a servant."—*Phil.* ii. 7.

The eternal Word descends on earth to save man; and whence does He descend? "His going out is from the end of heaven" (Ps. xviii. 7). He descends from the bosom of His Divine Father, where from eternity He was begotten in the brightness of the saints. And where does He descend? He descends into the womb of a Virgin, a child of Adam, which in comparison with the bosom of God is an object of horror; wherefore the Church sings, 'Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.' Yes, because the Word being in the bosom of the Father is God like the Father,—is immense, omnipotent, most blessed, and supreme Lord, and equal in every thing to the Father. But in the womb of Mary He is a creature, small, weak, afflicted, a servant inferior to the Father, "taking the form of a servant." It is related as a great prodigy of humility in St. Alexis, that although he was the son of a Roman gentleman, he chose to live as a servant in his father's house. But how is the humility of this saint to be compared to the humility of Jesus Christ? Between the son and the servant of the father of St. Alexis there was, it is true, some difference; but between God and the servant of God there is an infinite difference. Besides, this Son of God having become the servant of His Father, in obedience to Him, made Himself also the servant of His creatures, that is to say, of Mary and Joseph: "And He was subject to them" (St. Luke ii. 51). Moreover He made Himself even a servant of Pilate, who condemned Him to death, and He was obedient to him and accepted it; He became a servant to the executioners, who scourged Him, crowned Him with thorns and crucified Him; and He humbly obeyed them all, and yielded Himself into their hands. O God! and shall we, after this, refuse to submit ourselves to the service of so loving a Saviour, who, to save us, has subjected Himself to such painful and degrading slavery? And rather than be the servants of this great

and so loving a Lord, shall we be content to be slaves of the devil, who does not love his servants, but hates them and treats them like a tyrant, making them miserable and wretched in this world and in the next? But if we have been guilty of this great folly, why do we not quickly give up this unhappy servitude? Courage, then, since we have been delivered by Jesus Christ from the slavery of hell; let us now embrace and bind around us with love those sweet chains, which will render us servants and lovers of Jesus Christ, and hereafter obtain for us the crown of the eternal kingdom amongst the blessed in Paradise.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My beloved Jesus, Thou art the Sovereign of heaven and earth; but for the love of me Thou hast made Thyself a servant even of the executioners who tore Thy flesh, pierced Thy head, and finally left Thee nailed on the cross to die of sorrow. I adore Thee as my God and Lord, and I am ashamed to appear before Thee, when I remember how often, for the sake of some miserable pleasure, I have broken Thy holy bonds, and have told Thee to Thy face that I would not serve Thee. Ah, Thou mayst justly reproach me: "Thou hast burst my bands, and thou saidst: I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20). But still, O my Saviour, Thy merits and Thy goodness, which cannot despise a heart that repents and humbles itself, give me courage to hope for pardon: "A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. l. 19). I confess, my Jesus, that I have offended Thee greatly; I confess that I deserve a thousand hells for the sins I have committed against Thee; chasten me as Thou seest fit, but do not deprive me of Thy grace and love. I repent above every other evil of having despised Thee. I love Thee with my whole heart. I propose from this day forth to desire to serve Thee and love Thee alone. I pray Thee bind me by Thy merits with the chains of Thy holy love, and never suffer that I see myself released from them again. I love Thee above every thing, O my Deliverer; and I would prefer being Thy servant to being master of the whole world. And of what avail would

all the world be to him who lives deprived of Thy grace? 'My sweetest Jesus, permit me not to separate myself from Thee, permit me not to separate myself from Thee.' This grace I ask of Thee, and I intend always to ask it; and I beg of Thee to grant me this day the grace to repeat continually to the end of my life this prayer: My Jesus, grant that I may never again separate myself from Thy love. I ask this favour of thee also, O Mary, my Mother: help me by thy intercession, that I may never separate myself again from my God.

Meditation VI.

"The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth."—*Jer.* xxxi. 22.

Before the coming of the Messias the world was buried in a dark night of ignorance and sins. The true God was hardly known, save in one single corner of the earth, that is to say, in Judea alone: "In Judea God is known" (Ps. lxxv. 2). But every where else men adored as gods devils, beasts, and stones. Every where there reigned the night of sin, which blinds souls, and fills them with vices, and hides from them the sight of the miserable state in which they are living, as enemies of God and condemned to hell: "Thou hast appointed darkness, and it is night; in it shall all the beasts of the wood go about" (Ps. ciii. 20). From this darkness Jesus came to deliver the world: "To them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen" (Is. ix. 2). He delivered it from idolatry by making known to them the light of the true God; and He delivered them from sin by the light of His doctrine and of His Divine example: "For this purpose the Son of God appeared, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 St. John iii. 8). The prophet Jeremias foretold that God should create a new child to be the Redeemer of men: "The Lord hath created a new thing upon the earth." This new child was Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God, who is the object of the love of all the saints in Paradise, and is the love of the Father Himself, who thus speaks of Him: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well

pleased" (St. Matt. xvii. 5). And this Son is He who made Himself man. A new child, because He has given more glory and honour to God in the first moment of His creation than all the angels and saints together have given Him, or shall give Him for all eternity. And therefore did the angels at the birth of Jesus sing: "Glory to God in the highest." The child Jesus has rendered more glory to God than all the sins of men have deprived Him of. Let us, therefore, poor sinners, take courage; let us offer to the eternal Father this Infant; let us present to Him the tears, the obedience, the humility, the death, and the merits of Jesus Christ, and we shall make compensation to God for all the dishonour that we have caused Him by our offences.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My eternal God, I have dishonoured Thee by so often preferring my will to Thine, and my vile and miserable pleasures to Thy holy grace. What hope of pardon would there be for me, if Thou hadst not given me Jesus Christ on purpose that He might be the hope of us miserable sinners? "He is a propitiation for our sins." Yes, for Jesus Christ, in sacrificing His life in satisfaction for the injuries we have done Thee, has given Thee more honour than we have dishonour by our sins. Receive me, therefore, O my Father, for the love of Jesus Christ. I repent, O infinite Goodness, of having outraged Thee: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee: I am not worthy to be called thy son." I am not worthy of forgiveness; but Jesus Christ is worthy to be heard favourably by Thee. He prayed once for me on the cross: "Father, forgive;" and even now in heaven He is constantly begging Thee to receive me as a son: "We have an advocate, Jesus Christ, who ever intercedes for us." Receive an ungrateful son, who once forsook Thee, but now returns, resolved to desire to love Thee. Yes, my Father, I love Thee, and will always love Thee. O my Father, now that I know the love that Thou hast borne me, and the patience Thou hast shown me for so many years, I trust no longer to live without loving Thee. Give me a great love, that may make

me constantly lament the displeasure I have given Thee, who art so good a Father; cause me ever to burn with love towards Thee, who art so loving a Father. My Father, I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee! O Mary, God is my Father, and thou art my Mother. Thou canst do all things with God; help me; obtain for me holy perseverance and His holy love.

Meditation VII.

"God sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, even of sin, condemned sin in the flesh."—*Rom.* viii. 3.

Consider the humble state to which the Son of God chose to abase Himself; He not only vouchsafed to take upon Him the form of a servant, but that of a sinful servant: "In the likeness of sinful flesh." Therefore St. Bernard writes: 'He not only assumed the form of a servant, that He might be under subjection, but even that of a wicked servant, that He might be beaten.' He not only would assume the condition of a servant to be subject to others, He who was Lord of all; but even the appearance of a criminal servant, to be punished as a malefactor, He who was the Saint of all saints. For this end He clothed Himself with the same flesh of Adam which had been infected by sin. And although He did not contract the stain of sin, nevertheless He took upon Himself all the miseries which human nature had contracted as a penalty for sin. Our Redeemer, in order to obtain for us salvation, offered Himself voluntarily to His Father to make satisfaction for our sins: "He was offered because it was His own will" (Is. liii. 7). And His Father loaded Him with all our crimes: "He hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is. liii. 6). And thus behold the Divine Word, innocent, most pure, and holy, behold Him even from His infancy charged with all the blasphemies, with all the unsightliness, with all the sacrileges, and with all the crimes of men; become for the love of us the object of the Divine malediction, on account of the sins for which He had bound Himself to satisfy the Divine justice. So that Jesus charged Himself with as many maledictions as there have ever been, or ever shall

be, mortal sins committed by all mankind. And thus He presented Himself to His Father, when He came into the world, even from His birth, as a criminal and a debtor, guilty of all our sins, and as such was condemned by His Father to die as a malefactor accursed on a cross: "And of sin hath condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). Oh, if the eternal Father were capable of feeling sorrow, what anguish of mind would He not have felt at being obliged to treat as a criminal, and as the most villanous criminal in the world, this innocent Son, His beloved One, who was worthy of all His love! "Behold the Man," said Pilate, when he showed Him to the Jews covered with stripes, in order to move them to compassion towards this innocent One who had been thus ill-treated. "Behold the Man," the eternal Father seems to say to us all, showing Him to us in the stable of Bethlehem. This poor child (He says) whom you behold, laid on a manger for beasts, and stretched on straw, is my beloved Son, who is come into the world to take upon Himself your sins and your sorrows; love Him, therefore, because He is infinitely worthy of your love, and you are under infinite obligations to love Him.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my innocent Saviour, mirror without spot, love of the eternal Father, chastisements and maledictions did not belong to Thee, but to me, a miserable sinner; but Thou wouldst show to the world the excess of love Thou didst bear us by sacrificing Thy life to obtain for us pardon and salvation, and paying by Thy sufferings the penalties which we had incurred by our sins. May all creatures praise and bless Thy mercy and Thy infinite bounty! I thank Thee on behalf of all men, but especially for myself; because as I have offended Thee more than others, so Thou hast suffered the pains which Thou didst endure more for me than for others. Accursed a thousand times be all those sinful pleasures which I have delighted in, and which have cost Thee so much sorrow. But since Thou hast paid the price of my ransom, I beseech Thee let not the blood

which Thou hast spilt for love of me be lost to me. I am sorry that I have despised Thee, O my love; but oh, grant me more sorrow; make me know the evil I have committed in offending Thee, my Redeemer and my God, who hast suffered so much to oblige me to love Thee! I love Thee, O infinite Bounty, but I desire to love Thee more; I desire to love Thee as much as Thou deservest to be loved. O my Jesus, do Thou cause Thyself to be loved both by me and by all men; for Thou dost indeed deserve to be loved. I pray Thee, enlighten the minds of those sinners who will not know Thee or will not love Thee; make them understand what Thou hast done for the love of them, and the ardent desire Thou hast for their salvation. Most holy Mary, pray to Jesus for me, and for all sinners; obtain for us light and grace to love thy Son, who has loved us so much.

Meditation VIII.

"But God (who is rich in mercy) for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ."—*Eph.* ii. 4, 5.

Consider that sin is the death of the soul; because this enemy of God deprives us of Divine grace, which is the life of the soul. We, therefore, miserable sinners, were already by our sins dead and condemned to hell. God, through the immense love which He bears to our souls, determined to restore us to life; and how did He do so? He sent His only-begotten Son into the world to die, in order that by His death He might restore us to life. With reason therefore does the Apostle call this work of love "exceeding charity;" too much love; yes, indeed, for man could never have hoped to receive life in such a loving manner, if God had not found this means of redeeming him: "Having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 12). All men were therefore dead—there was no remedy for them. But the Son of God, through the bowels of His mercy, hath come down from heaven, *the Orient from on high*, and has given us life. Justly, therefore, does the Apostle call Jesus Christ our life: "When Christ shall

appear, who is your life" (Coloss. iii. 4). Behold, our Redeemer, clothed with flesh and become an infant, says to us: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (St. John x. 10). For this end He accepted death, that He might give us life. It is but reasonable therefore that we should live only to God, who has condescended to die for us: "Christ died, that they who live may not live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them" (2 Cor. iv. 15). It is reasonable that Jesus Christ should be the only sovereign of our heart, since He has spent His blood and His life to gain it to Himself: "To this end Christ died and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom. xiv. 9). O my God! who would be such an ungrateful wretch as to believe as an article of faith that God died to secure his love, and yet refuse to love Him, and renouncing His friendship, choose voluntarily to make himself a slave of hell?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my Jesus, if Thou hadst not accepted and suffered death for me, I should have remained dead in my sins, without hope of salvation and without the power of ever loving Thee. But after Thou, by Thy death, hast obtained life for me, I have again many times voluntarily forfeited it by returning to sin. Thou didst die to gain my heart to Thyself, and I by my rebellion have made it a slave of the devil. I lost all reverence for Thee, and I said that I would no longer have Thee for my master. All this is true; but it is also true that Thou desirest not the death of the sinner, but that he should be converted and live; and therefore didst Thou die to give us life. I repent of having offended Thee, my dearest Redeemer; and do Thou pardon me through the merits of Thy passion; give me Thy grace; give me that life which Thou hast purchased for me by Thy death, and from henceforth do Thou take entire dominion over my heart. Never let the devil have possession of it again; he is not my God, he does not love me, and has not suffered any thing for me. In past times

he was not the true sovereign, but the robber of my soul; Thou alone, my Jesus, art my true Lord, who hast created and redeemed me with Thy blood; Thou alone hast loved me, and oh, how much! It is therefore only just that I should be Thine alone during the life that remains to me. Tell me what Thou wouldst have me to do; for I will do it all. Chastise me as Thou wilt; I accept every thing Thou sendest me; only spare me the chastisement of living without Thy love; make me love Thee, and then dispose of me as Thou wilt. Most holy Mary, my refuge and consolation, recommend me to thy Son: His death and thy intercession are all my hope.

Meditation IX.

"He hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us."—*Eph.* v. 2.

Consider that the eternal Word is that God who is so infinitely happy in Himself that His happiness cannot be greater than it is, nor could the salvation of all mankind have added any thing to it or have diminished it; and yet He has done and suffered so much to save us miserable worms, that if His beatitude (as St. Thomas says) had depended on that of man, He could not have done or suffered more: 'As if without him He could not be happy;' and indeed, if Jesus Christ could not have been happy without redeeming us, how could He have humbled Himself more than He has done, in taking upon Himself our infirmities, the miseries of infancy, the troubles of human life, and a death so barbarous and ignominious? None but God was capable of loving to such an excess such wretched sinners as we are, and who were so unworthy of being loved. A devout author says: If Jesus Christ had permitted us to ask of Him to give us the greatest proof of His love, who would have ventured to ask of Him that He should become a child like unto us, that He should clothe Himself with all our miseries, and make Himself of all men the most poor, the most despised, and the most ill-treated, even to being put to death by the hands of executioners, and in the greatest torments upon an infamous gibbet, cursed and forsaken by

all, even by His own Father, who abandoned His Son that He might not abandon us in our ruin? But that which we should not have had the boldness even to think of, the Son of God has thought of and accomplished. Even from His childhood He has sacrificed Himself for us to sufferings, to opprobrium, and to death: "He hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us." He hath loved us, and out of love hath given us Himself, in order that we, by offering Him as a victim to the Father, in satisfaction for our debts, might through His merits obtain from the Divine goodness all the graces that we desire; a victim dearer to the Father than if we had offered Him the lives of all men and of all the angels. Let us therefore continually offer to God the merits of Jesus Christ, and through them let us seek and hope for every good.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My Jesus, I should indeed do great injustice to Thy mercy and Thy love, if, after Thou hast given me so many proofs of the love Thou bearest me, and the desire Thou hast to save me, I should still distrust Thy mercy and Thy love. My beloved Redeemer, I am a poor sinner; but Thou hast said that Thou didst come to seek sinners: "I am not come to call the just, but sinners" (St. Matt. ix. 13). I am a poor infirm creature,—Thou camest to cure the infirm, and Thou didst say: "They that are whole need not the physician, but they that are sick" (St. Luke v. 31). I was lost through my sins; but Thou didst come to save the lost: "The Son of man is come to save that which was lost" (St. Matt. xviii. 11). What then can I fear, if I am willing to amend my life and to become Thine? I have only myself and my own weakness to fear; but my own weakness and poverty ought to increase my confidence in Thee, who hast declared Thyself to be the refuge of the destitute: "The Lord is become a refuge for the poor" (Ps. ix. 10). And Thou hast promised to grant their desires: "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor" (Ps. x. 17). Therefore I implore this favour of Thee, O my Jesus; give me confidence in Thy merits, and grant that I may always recommend myself to God through Thy merits. Eternal Father,

save me from hell, and first from sin, for the love of Jesus Christ; for the merits of this Thy Son enlighten my mind to obey Thy will; give me strength against temptations; grant me the gift of Thy holy love; and above all, I beseech Thee to give me the grace to pray to Thee to help me, for the love of Jesus Christ, who hast promised that Thou wilt grant to him who prays in His name whatever he asks of Thee. If I continue to pray to Thee in this way, I shall certainly be saved; but if I neglect it, I shall certainly be lost. Most holy Mary, obtain for me this great gift of prayer, and that I may persevere in recommending myself constantly to God, and also to thee, who dost obtain from God whatever thou willest.

Meditation X.

"A man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity."—*Is.* liii. 3.

Thus does the prophet Isaias designate our Lord Jesus Christ "the man of sorrows;" yes, because this man was created on purpose to suffer, and from His infancy began to endure the greatest sorrows that any man ever suffered. The first man, Adam, enjoyed for some time upon this earth the delights of the earthly paradise; but the second Adam, Jesus Christ, did not pass a moment of His life without sorrows and anguish; for even from a child He was afflicted by the foresight of all the sufferings and ignominy that He would have to endure during His life, and especially at His death, when He was to close that life immersed in a tempest of sorrow and opprobrium, as David had predicted: "I am come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest hath overwhelmed me" (Ps. lxviii. 3). Even from the womb of Mary, Jesus Christ accepted obediently the sacrifice which His Father had desired Him to make, even His passion and death: "Becoming obedient unto death" (Phil. ii. 8). So that even from the womb of Mary He foresaw the scourges and presented to them His flesh; He foresaw the thorns, and presented to them His head; He foresaw the blows, and presented to them His cheeks; He foresaw the nails, and presented to them His hands and His feet; He foresaw the cross, and offered His life. Hence it is true, that even

from His earliest infancy our blessed Redeemer every moment of His life suffered a continual martyrdom ; and He offered it every moment for us to His eternal Father. But what afflicted Him most was the sight of the sins which men would commit even after this painful redemption. By His divine light He well knew the malice of every sin, and therefore did He come into the world to do away with all sins ; but when He saw the immense number which would be committed, the sorrow that the Heart of Jesus felt was greater than all the sorrows that all men ever suffered or ever will suffer upon earth.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My sweetest Redeemer, when shall I begin to be grateful to Thy infinite goodness? When shall I begin to acknowledge the love that Thou hast borne me, and the sorrows Thou hast endured for me? Hitherto, instead of love and gratitude, I have returned Thee offences and contempt; shall I then continue to live always ungrateful to Thee, my God, who hast spared nothing to acquire my love? No, my Jesus, it shall not be so. During the days that may yet remain to me I will be grateful to Thee ; and Thou wilt, I trust, help me to be so. If I have offended Thee, Thy sufferings and Thy death are my hope. Thou hast promised to forgive the penitent. I repent with my whole soul of having despised Thee. Fulfil, therefore, Thy promise, my Beloved, and forgive me. O dearest Infant, I behold Thee in the manger already nailed to Thy cross, which is constantly present to Thee, and which Thou dost already accept for me. O my crucified Infant, I thank Thee for it, and I love Thee. Stretched upon this straw, suffering already for me, and preparing Thyself even now to die for this love of me, Thou dost command and invite me to love Thee: "Love the Lord thy God." And I desire nothing more than to love Thee. Since, therefore, Thou willest that I should love Thee, give me all that love that Thou requirest of me ; love for Thee is Thy gift, and the greatest gift that Thou canst make to a soul. Accept, O my Jesus, for Thy lover a sinner who has so greatly offended Thee. Thou didst

come from heaven to seek the lost sheep; do Thou, therefore, seek me, and I will seek none other but Thee. Thou desirest my soul, and my soul desires nothing but Thee. Thou lovest him that loves Thee, and sayest, 'Those that love Me I love.' I love Thee, do Thou also love me; and if Thou lovest me, bind me to Thy love; but bind me so that I may never again be able to disengage myself from Thee. Mary, my Mother, do thou help me. Let it be thy glory also to see thy Son loved by a miserable sinner, who has hitherto so greatly offended Him.

Meditation XI.

"He bore our iniquities."—*Is.* liii. 11.

Consider how that the divine Word, in becoming man, chose not only to take the form of a sinner, but also to bear all the sins of men, and to satisfy for them as if they were His own: "He bore our iniquities." Father Cornelius adds, 'as if He had committed them Himself.'

Let us here reflect what an oppression and anguish the heart of the Infant Jesus must have felt, who had already charged Himself with the sins of the whole world, in finding that the divine justice insisted on His making a full satisfaction for them. Well did He know the malice of every sin, whilst, through the Divine light which accompanied Him, He knew immeasurably more than all men and angels the infinite goodness of His Father, and how infinitely deserving He is of being revered and loved. And then He saw drawn up in array before Him an innumerable number of transgressions which were to be committed by men, and for which He was to suffer and die. Our Lord once showed to St. Catherine of Sienna the hideousness of one single venial sin; and such was the dread and sorrow of the saint, that she fell senseless to the ground. What then must have been the sufferings of the Infant Jesus, when, on His entrance into the world, He saw before Him the immense array of all the crimes of men for which He was to make satisfaction! And then He knew in particular every sin of each one of us: 'He had regard to every particular sin,'

says St. Bernard of Sienna.[2] And Cardinal Hugo says, that the executioners 'caused Him exterior pain, by crucifying Him, but we interior pain, by sinning against Him.' He means that each one of our sins afflicted the soul of Jesus Christ more than crucifixion and death afflicted His body. Such is the beautiful recompense which has been rendered to our divine Saviour for His love by every one who remembers to have offended Him by mortal sin.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My beloved Jesus, I, who have offended Thee, am not worthy of Thy favours, but through the merit of that pain which Thou didst suffer, and which Thou didst offer up to God at the sight of my sins, and to satisfy Divine justice for them, give me a share in that light by which Thou didst see their malice, and in that hatred with which Thou didst then abominate them. Can it then be true, my amiable Saviour, that ever since Thou wert an infant, and in every moment of Thy life, I have been a murderer of Thy sacred Heart, and a murderer more cruel than all those who crucified Thee? And I have renewed and increased this suffering every time I have repeated my offences against Thee? O Lord, Thou hast indeed died to save me; but Thy death will not save me, if I do not on my part detest every evil, and have true sorrow for the sins I have committed against Thee. But even this sorrow must be given me by Thee. Thou givest it to him that asks it of Thee. I ask it of Thee through the merits of all the sufferings Thou didst endure on this earth; give me sorrow for my sins, but a sorrow that shall correspond to my transgressions. Help me, O Lord, to make that act of contrition which I now intend to do. O eternal God, supreme and infinite Good, I, a miserable worm, have dared to lose respect for Thee, and to despise Thy grace; I detest above every evil and abhor the injuries I have committed against Thee; I repent of them with my whole heart, not so much on account of hell, which I have deserved, as because I have offended Thy infinite goodness. I hope for pardon from Thee through the merits of Jesus Christ; and I hope also to obtain, together with Thy pardon, the grace of loving

Thee. I love Thee, O God, who art worthy of infinite love, and I will always repeat to Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee; and as Thy beloved St. Catherine of Genoa said to Thee, while she stood in spirit at Thy feet, O Thou crucified One, so will I also say to Thee now that I am standing also at Thy feet, My Lord, no more sins, no more sins! No, for Thou indeed dost not deserve to be offended, O my Jesus, but Thou only deservest to be loved. My blessed Redeemer, help me. My mother Mary, assist me, I pray thee; I only ask of thee to obtain for me that I may love God during the time that is left me in this life.

Meditation XII.

"My sorrow is continually before me."—*Ps.* xxxvii. 18.

Consider how that all the sufferings and ignominy that Jesus endured in His life and death, all were present to Him from the first moment of His life: "My sorrow is continually before me;" and even from His childhood He began to offer them in satisfaction for our sins, beginning even then to fulfil His office of Redeemer. He revealed to one of His servants that from the commencement of His life even until His death, He suffered continually; and suffered so much for each of our sins, that if He had had as many lives as there are men, he would as many times have died of sorrow, if God had not preserved His life that He might suffer more.[3] Oh, what a martyrdom did the loving Heart of Jesus constantly endure in beholding all the sins of men! "He beheld every single fault." Even whilst He was in the womb of Mary every particular sin passed in review before Jesus, and each sin afflicted Him immeasurably. St. Thomas says,[4] that this sorrow which Jesus Christ felt at the knowledge of the injury done to His Father, and of the evil that sin would occasion to the souls that He loved, surpassed the sorrows of all the contrite sinners that ever existed, even of those who died of pure sorrow; because no sinner ever loved God and his own soul as much as Jesus loved His Father and our souls. Wherefore that agony which our Redeemer suffered in the garden

at the sight of our sins was endured by Him even from His mother's womb: "I am poor, and in labours from my youth" (Ps. lxxxvii. 16). Thus through the mouth of David did our Saviour prophesy of Himself, that all His life should be a continual suffering. From this St. John Chrysostom deduces, that we ought not to afflict ourselves for any thing but for sin alone; and that since Jesus was afflicted all His life long on account of our sins, so we who have committed them ought to feel a continual sorrow for them, remembering that we have offended God who has loved us so much. St. Margaret of Cortona never ceased to shed tears for her sins: one day her confessor said to her, 'Margaret, no more tears; it is enough, our Lord has already forgiven thee.' 'What,' answered the saint, 'how can my tears and my sorrows suffice for the sins for which my Jesus was afflicted all His life long!'

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Behold, my Jesus, at Thy feet the ungrateful sinner, the persecutor who kept Thee in continual affliction during all Thy life. But I will say to Thee with Isaias: "But Thou hast delivered my soul that it should not perish; Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back" (Is. xxxviii. 17). I have offended Thee, I have pierced Thee through with all my sins; but Thou hast not refused to bear on Thy shoulders all my sins; I have voluntarily cast my soul into the fire of hell every time that I have consented to offend Thee gravely; and Thou, at the cost of Thy own blood, hast continually liberated me and prevented my being entirely lost. My beloved Redeemer, I thank Thee. I could wish to die of sorrow, when I think how I have abused Thy infinite goodness; forgive me, my Love, and come and take entire possession of my heart. Thou hast said that Thou wouldst not disdain to enter into the abode of him that opens to Thee, and to remain in his company: "If any man shall open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him" (Apoc. iii. 20). If I have hitherto driven Thee away from me, I now love Thee, and desire nothing but Thy favour. Behold the door is open, enter Thou into my heart, but enter never to depart from

it again. I am poor; but if Thou enter in, Thou wilt make me rich. I shall always be rich as long as I possess Thee, the sovereign good. O Queen of heaven, sorrowful Mother of this suffering Son, I have also been a cause of sorrow to thee, because thou hast participated, in great part, in the sufferings of Jesus: my Mother, do thou also forgive me, and obtain for me the grace to be faithful to thee, now that I hope my Jesus has returned into my soul.

Meditation XIII.

"I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!"—*St. Luke* xii. 50.

Consider how Jesus suffered, even from the first moment of His life, and all for the love of us. During the whole of His life He had no other object in view, after the glory of God, than our salvation. He, as the Son of God, had no need to suffer in order to deserve Paradise; but whatever He suffered of pain, of poverty, of ignominy, He applied it all towards meriting for us eternal salvation. And even although He could have saved us without sufferings, yet He chose to embrace a life of nothing but sufferings, poor, despised, and deprived of every comfort, with a death the most desolate and bitter that was ever endured by any martyr or penitent, only to make us understand the greatness of the love He bore us, and to gain our affections. He lived thirty-three years, and He lived sighing after the hour in which He was to sacrifice His life, which He desired to offer up to obtain for us Divine grace and eternal glory, in order that He might have us with Him for ever in Paradise. It was this desire which made Him say, "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptised; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" He desired to be baptised with His own blood, not to wash out His own sins, since He was innocent and holy, but the sins of men whom He loved so much: "He loved us, and washed us in His own blood" (Apoc. i. 5). Oh, excess of the love of God, which all the men and angels that ever existed will never arrive at understanding or praising

as it deserves! St. Bonaventure complains on considering the great ingratitude of men for such great love: 'It is wonderful that the hearts of men do not break for love of Thee.'[5] It is a wonder, says the saint, to see a God endure such sufferings, shedding tears in a stable, poor in a workshop, languishing on a cross; in short, afflicted and troubled the whole of His life for the love of men; and then to see these men, who not only do not burn with love towards such a loving God, but even have the boldness to despise His love and His grace. O Lord, how is it possible to know that a God should have given Himself up to so much suffering for men, and yet that there should be men who can offend, and not love this merciful God!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My beloved Redeemer, I am also one of those ungrateful wretches who have repaid Thy immense love, Thy sorrows, and Thy death, with offences and contempt; O my dearest Jesus, how is it possible that, seeing as Thou didst the ingratitude that I should show Thee for all Thy mercies, Thou couldst yet love me so much, and resolve to endure so much contempt and suffering for me! But I will not despair. The evil is already done. Give me, therefore, O my Saviour, that sorrow which Thou hast merited for me by Thy tears; but let it be a sorrow equal to my iniquities. O loving Heart of my Saviour, once so afflicted and desolate for my sake, and now all burning with love for me, I beseech Thee, change my heart, give me a heart that shall make reparation for the offences I have committed against Thee, give me a love that shall equal my ingratitude!

But I already feel a great desire of loving Thee. I give Thee thanks, my Saviour, because I see that Thy mercy has already changed my heart. I hate, above every evil, the insults I have offered Thee; I detest them, I abhor them. I now esteem Thy friendship above all the riches and kingdoms of the world. I desire to please Thee as much as is possible to me; I love Thee, who art infinitely amiable; but I see that this my love is too small. Do Thou increase the flame, give me more love. Thy love

for me ought to be responded to by a greater degree of love by me, who have so much offended Thee, and who, instead of chastisement, have received so many special favours from Thee. O sovereign Good, permit me not to be any longer ungrateful for all the favours Thou hast bestowed upon me: 'I will die with love of the love of Thee,' I will say with St. Francis, 'who hast deigned to die for love of the love of me.' Mary, my hope, help me; pray to Jesus for me!

Meditation XIV.

"What profit is there in my blood, whilst I go down to corruption?"—*Ps.* xxix. 10.

Jesus Christ revealed to the Venerable Agatha of the Cross, that whilst He was in His Mother's womb, that which afflicted Him more than any other sorrow was the hardness of the hearts of men, who should, after His Redemption, despise the graces which He came into the world to diffuse. And He had expressed this sentiment before, by the mouth of David, in the words just quoted, which are generally thus understood by the holy fathers: "What profit is there in my blood, whilst I go down to corruption?" St. Isidore explains, "whilst I descend into corruption," 'whilst I descend to take the nature of man, so corrupted by vices and sins;' as if He had said, 'O my Father, I am indeed going to clothe Myself with human flesh, in order to shed My blood for men; but "what profit is there in My blood?"—the greater part of the world will set no value on My blood, and will go on offending Me, as if I had done nothing for the love of them.' This sorrow was the bitter chalice which Jesus begged the Eternal Father to remove from Him, saying: "Let this chalice pass from Me" (St. Matt. xxvi. 39). What chalice? The sight of the contempt with which His love was treated. This made Him exclaim again on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? (St. Matt. xxvii. 46.) Our Lord revealed to St. Catherine of Sienna,[6] that this was the abandonment of which He complained, the knowledge, namely, that His Father would have to suffer

that His passion and His love should be despised by so many men for whom He died. And this same sorrow tormented the Infant Jesus in the womb of Mary, the foresight of such a prodigality of sorrows, of ignominy, of bloodshedding, and of such a cruel and ignominious death, and all to so little purpose. The holy Child saw, even there, what the apostle says, that many (indeed the greater number) should trample under foot His blood, and despise His grace, which this blood would obtain for them: "Treading under foot the Son of God, and offering an affront to the Spirit of grace" (Heb. x. 29). But if we have been of the number of these ungrateful men, let us not despair; Jesus, at His birth, came to offer peace to men of good-will, as He made the angels sing: "And on earth peace to men of good-will." Let us, then, change our will, repent of our sins, and resolve to love this good God, and we shall find peace, that is, the Divine friendship.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my most amiable Jesus, how much have I too caused Thee to suffer during Thy lifetime! Thou hast shed Thy blood for me with so much sorrow and love, and what fruit hast Thou hitherto drawn from me but contempt, offences, and insults? But, my Redeemer, I will no longer afflict Thee; I hope that in future Thy passion will produce fruit in me by Thy grace, which I feel is already assisting me. I will love Thee above every other good; and to please Thee, I am ready to give my life a thousand times. Eternal Father, I should not have the boldness to appear before Thee to implore either pardon or graces; but Thy Son has told me, that whatever grace I ask of Thee in His name Thou wilt grant it to me: "If ye shall ask any thing of the Father in My name, He will give it you." I offer Thee, therefore, the merits of Jesus Christ, and in His name I ask of Thee first a general pardon of all my sins; I ask holy perseverance even unto death; I ask of Thee above all the gift of Thy holy love, that it may make me always live according to Thy Divine Will. As to my own will, I am resolved to choose a thousand deaths sooner than offend Thee, and to love Thee with my whole heart, and to

do every thing that I possibly can to please Thee. But in order to do all this, I beg of Thee, and hope to receive from Thee, grace to execute what I purpose. My Mother Mary, if thou wilt pray for me, I am safe. Oh, pray for me, pray; and cease not praying till thou seest that I am changed, and made what God wishes me to be.

Meditation XV.

"You shall find the infant laid in a manger."—*St. Luke* ii. 16.

The Holy Church, in contemplating this great mystery and prodigy of a God being born in a stable, exclaims, full of admiration, 'O great mystery! O wonderful sacrament! for animals to behold the Lord lying in a manger' (Offic. Nat. resp. i. noct. 2). In order to contemplate with tenderness and love the birth of Jesus, we must pray the Lord to give us a lively faith. If without faith we enter into the grot of Bethlehem, we shall have nothing but a feeling of compassion at seeing an infant reduced to such a state of poverty, that, being born in the depth of winter, he is laid in a manger of beasts, without fire, and in the midst of a cold cavern. But if we enter with faith, and consider what an excess of bounty and love it was in a God to humble Himself to appear like a little child, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, placed on straw, crying and shivering with cold, unable to move, depending for subsistence on His Mother's milk, how is it possible that we should not feel ourselves gently constrained to give all our affections to this Infant God, who has reduced Himself to this state to make us love Him! St. Luke says that the shepherds, after having visited Jesus in the manger, "returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen" (St. Luke ii. 20). And yet what had they seen? Nothing more than a poor child trembling with cold on a little straw; but being enlightened by faith, they recognised in this child the excess of Divine love; and inflamed by this love they went on their way glorifying God, that they had the happiness to behold a God 'who had emptied Himself' and annihilated Himself for the love of men.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my amiable and sweet Infant, although I behold Thee so poor and lying on straw, yet I confess and adore Thee as my Lord and Creator. I know what it was that reduced Thee to such a miserable state; it was the love that Thou didst bear me. But when I remember, O my Jesus, how I have treated Thee in times past, the injuries I have committed against Thee, I wonder in myself how Thou hast borne with me. Accursed sins, oh, what have you done! You have made me cause bitterness to the Heart of my beloved Saviour. Oh, my dearest Redeemer, for the sake of the sufferings Thou didst endure and the tears Thou didst shed in the stable of Bethlehem, give me tears, give me a great sorrow, that may make me all my life long lament the displeasure I have caused Thee. Grant me a love for Thee, but such a love as may compensate for the offences I have committed against Thee. I love Thee, my Infant Saviour; I love Thee, my Infant God; I love Thee, my love, my life, my all. I promise Thee from this day forth to love none but Thee. Do Thou help me by Thy grace, without which I can do nothing. Mary, my hope, thou dost obtain whatever thou willest from thy Son, obtain for me His holy love; my Mother, hear me!

Meditation XVI.

"You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains."—*Is.* xii. 3.

Consider the four fountains of grace that we have in Jesus Christ, as contemplated by St. Bernard.[7] The first is that of mercy, in which we can wash ourselves from all the filthiness of our sins. This fountain was formed for us by our Redeemer with His tears and His blood: "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Apoc. i. 5).

The second fountain is that of peace and consolation in our tribulations: "Call upon Me" (saith Jesus Christ) "in the day of trouble, and I will console thee" (Ps. xlix. 15). "He that thirsteth, let him come to Me" (St. John vii. 37).

He that thirsteth for true consolations even in this world, let him come to Me, for I will satisfy him. He that once tastes the water of My love will for ever disdain all the delights of the world: "But he that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever" (St. John iv. 13). And thoroughly contented will he be when he shall enter into the kingdom of the blessed, for the water of My grace shall raise him from earth to Heaven. It will "become in him a fountain of water springing up into life everlasting" (St. John iv. 14). The peace which God gives to the souls that love Him is not the peace that the world promises from sensual pleasures, which leave in the soul more bitterness than peace; the peace which God bestows exceeds all the pleasures of the senses: "Peace which surpasseth all understanding." Blessed are those who long for this divine fountain. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice" (St. Matt. v. 6).

The third fountain is that of devotion. Oh, how devout and ready to execute the Divine will, and increasing every day in virtue, is he who constantly meditates on all that Jesus Christ has done for our sake! He will be like the tree planted by a stream of water: "He shall be like a tree that is planted near the running waters" (Ps. i. 3).

The fourth fountain is that of love: "In my meditation a fire shall flame out" (Ps. xxxviii. 4). It is impossible to meditate on the sufferings and ignominy borne by Jesus Christ for the love of us, and not to feel inflamed by that blessed fire which He came upon earth to enkindle. How true it is, then, that he who avails himself of these blessed fountains of Jesus Christ will always draw from them waters of joy and of salvation! "You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains."

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my sweet and dearest Saviour, how much do I not owe Thee! What an obligation hast Thou put upon me of loving Thee, since Thou hast done for me what no son would have done for his father, and no servant for his master. If Thou, therefore, hast loved me above every one

else, it is only just that I should love Thee above all others. I could wish to die with sorrow at the thought that Thou hast suffered so much for me, and that Thou didst accept for my sake the most painful and ignominious death that it is possible for a man to endure; and yet I have so often despised Thy friendship. How many times hast Thou forgiven me, and I have despised Thee afresh? But Thy merits are my hope. I now esteem Thy grace above all the kingdoms of the world. I love Thee, and for Thy love I accept every sorrow, every kind of death. And if I am not worthy to die for Thy glory by the hand of executioners, I accept at least willingly that death which Thou hast allotted to me; and I accept it in the manner and at the time that Thou shalt choose. My dear Mother Mary, obtain for me the grace always to live and to die loving Jesus.

Meditation XVII.

"But unto you the sun of justice shall arise, and health in his wings." *Mal.* iv. 2.

Your physician will come, says the prophet, to cure the infirm; and he will come swiftly like the bird that flies, and like the sun, which, on rising from the horizon, instantly sends its light to the other pole. But behold Him, He is already come. Let us console ourselves, and return thanks to Him. St. Augustine says, 'He descends to the bed of the sick;' that is to say, even to taking upon Him our flesh, for our bodies are the beds of our infirm souls. Other physicians, if they love their patients, do indeed use all their efforts to cure them; but what physician, in order to cure the sick man, ever took upon himself his disease? Jesus Christ has been that physician, who charged Himself with our infirmities in order to cure them. Neither would He content Himself with sending another in His place, but He chose to come Himself to fulfil this charitable office, in order to gain to Himself all our love: "He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows" (Is. liii. 4). He chose to heal our wounds with His own blood, and by His death to deliver

us from eternal death, which we had deserved; in short, He chose to swallow the bitter draught of a life of continual sufferings and a painful death, to obtain for us life, and deliver us from our many evils: "The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" said He to St. Peter (St. John xviii. 11). It was necessary, then, that Jesus Christ should suffer so many ignominies to heal our pride; that He should embrace such a life of poverty to cure our covetousness; that He should be overwhelmed in a sea of troubles, and even die of pure sorrow, to cure our eagerness after sensual pleasures.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

May Thy charity, O my Redeemer, be for ever praised and blessed. And what would become of my soul, thus infirm and afflicted with the many sores of my sins, if I had not Thee, my Jesus, who both art able and willing to heal me? O blood of my Saviour, I trust in thee; wash me and cure me. I repent, O my love, of having offended Thee. Thou hast led a life of such tribulations, and hast died such a bitter death to prove to me the love Thou dost bear me. I would fain show Thee how much I love Thee; but what can I do, who am so miserable and weak? O God of my soul, Thou art omnipotent; Thou canst heal me, and make me holy. Oh, kindle in me a great desire of pleasing Thee. I renounce all my pleasures to please Thee, my Redeemer, who dost deserve to be pleased at all costs. O sovereign Good, I esteem Thee and love Thee above every good; make me love Thee with all my heart, and always implore Thy love. I have hitherto offended Thee, and have not loved Thee, because I have not sought Thy love. I now beg of Thee this love, and the grace always to seek it. Oh, grant my prayer by the merits of Thy passion. O Mary my Mother, thou art always prepared to hear the prayer of him that calls upon thee. Thou lovest him that loves thee. I love thee, my Queen; obtain for me the grace to love God, and I ask nothing more of thee.

Meditation XVIII.

"He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all."—*Rom.* viii. 32.

Consider that, since the Eternal Father has given us His own Son to be our mediator and advocate with Him, and the victim in satisfaction for our sins, we cannot despair of obtaining from God whatever favour we ask of Him, if we avail ourselves of the help of such a Redeemer. "How hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" adds the apostle. What can God deny us when He has not denied us His Son? None of our prayers deserve to be heard or granted by the Lord, for we do not deserve graces, but punishment for our sins; but Jesus Christ, who intercedes for us, and offers for us all the sufferings of His life, His blood, and His death, does indeed deserve to be heard. The Father cannot refuse any thing to so dear a Son, who offers Him a price of infinite value. He is innocent; all that He pays to Divine justice is to satisfy our debts; and the satisfaction He offers is infinitely greater than all the sins of men. It would not be just that a sinner should perish who repents of his sins, and offers to God the merits of Jesus Christ, who has already superabundantly atoned for him. Let us therefore thank God, and hope all things from the merits of Jesus Christ.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

No, my God and my Father, I can no longer distrust Thy mercy; I cannot fear that Thou wilt refuse me the pardon of all the sins I have committed against Thee, and that Thou wilt withhold from me the graces necessary for my salvation, since Thou hast given me Thy Son, in order that I should offer Him to Thee. Thou hast given me Jesus Christ on purpose to pardon me, and to render me capable of receiving Thy grace, and Thou hast commanded me to offer Him to Thee, and to hope for salvation from Thee for His merits. Yes, my God, I will obey Thee, and I thank Thee. I offer Thee the merits of this Thy Son,

and through them I hope for grace to remedy my weakness, and all the injuries that I have done myself by my sins. I repent, O infinite Goodness, of having offended Thee, and I love Thee above every thing; and from this day forth I promise Thee to love none but Thee. But my promise will be of no avail if Thou dost not help me. For the love of Jesus Christ, give me light and strength to accomplish all Thy holy will. Trusting, therefore, in the merits of Jesus Christ, I hope that Thou wilt grant my prayer. Mary, my Mother and my hope, I beseech thee also, for the love of Jesus Christ, to obtain for me this grace. O my Mother, listen to my prayer!

MEDITATIONS

FOR THE NOVENA FOR CHRISTMAS.

Meditation I.

"I have given Thee to be the light of the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation even to the farthest part of the earth."—*Is.* xlix. 6.

Consider how the Eternal Father addressed these words to the Infant Jesus at the instant of His conception: '"I have given Thee to be the light of the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation." My Son, I have given Thee to the world for the light and life of all people, in order that Thou mightest procure for them their salvation, which I have as much at heart as if it were My own. Thou must therefore employ Thyself entirely for the well-being of men: 'Wholly given to man, Thou must be wholly spent in his service.'[8] Thou, must therefore, at Thy birth, suffer extreme poverty, in order that man may become rich,' that Thou mayest enrich them by Thy poverty.' Thou must be sold as a slave to acquire liberty for man; and Thou must be scourged and crucified as a slave to satisfy My justice for the punishment due to man. Thou must give Thy blood and Thy life to deliver man from eternal death; in short, Thou art no longer Thine own, but Thou belongest to man: "A child is born to us, a son is given to us" (Is. ix. 6). Thus, my beloved Son, man will be constrained to love Me, and to be Mine, when he sees that I give Thee, My only-begotten One, entirely to him, and that there is nothing left for Me to give him.'

"God so loved the world"—(oh, infinite love! only worthy of an infinite God!)—"God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son" (St. John iii. 16). The Infant Jesus, far from being sorrowful at this proposal, is

pleased at it, accepts it with love, and exults in it: "He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way" (Ps. xviii. 6); and from the first moment of His incarnation He gives Himself entirely to man, and embraces with pleasure all the sorrows and ignominy that He must suffer on earth for the love of man. These were (says St. Bernard) the mountains and hills that Jesus Christ had to pass with so many labours in order to save man: "Behold, He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills" (Cant. ii. 8). Here consider that the Divine Father, in sending His Son to be our Redeemer and Mediator between Himself and man, has in a certain sense bound Himself to forgive us and love us, on account of the covenant He made to receive us into His favour, providing His Son satisfied for us His Divine justice. On the other hand, the Divine Word, having accepted the decree of His Father (who, by sending Him to redeem us, has given Him to us), has also bound Himself to love us; not, indeed, for our own merits, but in order to fulfil the merciful will of His Father.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My dearest Jesus, if it is true (as the law says) that dominion is acquired by gift, since Thy Father hath given Thee to me, Thou art mine; for me Thou wert born, to me hast Thou been given: "A child is born to us, a Son is given to us." Therefore I may well say: 'My Jesus and my all.' Since Thou art mine, every thing that belongs to Thee is also mine. Of this I am assured by Thy Apostle: "How hath He not also with Him given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.) Thy blood is mine, Thy merits are mine, Thy grace is mine, Thy paradise is mine; and if Thou art mine, who shall be able to take Thee from me? No man can take God away from me,' said with joy the abbot St. Anthony. So, from this day forth, will I also continually say. It is only through my own fault that I can lose Thee and separate myself from Thee; but if in past times I have abandoned Thee and lost Thee, O my Jesus, I now repent of it with all my soul, and I am resolved to lose my life and every thing sooner than lose Thee, O infinite Good, and only love of my soul! I thank

Thee, Eternal Father, for having given me Thy Son; and since Thou hast given Him entirely to me, I, miserable sinner, give myself entirely to Thee. For the sake of this same Son, accept me, and bind me with the chains of love to this my Redeemer; but bind me so strongly that I also may be able to say: "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" What good shall there ever be in the world that shall separate me from my Jesus? And Thou, my Saviour, if Thou art all mine, know that I am all Thine. Dispose of me, and of all that belongs to me, as shall best please Thee. And how can I refuse any thing to a God who has not refused me His blood and His life? Mary, my Mother, do thou guard me with thy protection. I will no longer be my own. I will be all my Saviour's. Do thou help me to be faithful; I trust in thee.

Meditation II.

"Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me."—*Heb.* x. 5.

Consider the great bitterness with which the Heart of the Infant Jesus must have felt itself afflicted and oppressed in the womb of Mary at the first moment when His Father proposed to His consideration all the series of contempt, sorrow, and agonies which He was to suffer during His life, to deliver men from their miseries: "In the morning he wakeneth my ear, and I do not resist; I have given my body to the strikers" (Is. l. 4, 6). Thus did Jesus speak by the mouth of the prophet: "In the morning he wakeneth my ear," that is to say, from the first moment of my conception my Father made me feel that it was His will that I should lead a life of sorrows, and in the end should be sacrificed on the cross: "And I do not resist; I have given my body to the strikers." And all this I accepted for your salvation, O ye souls of men, and from that time forth I gave up my body to the scourges, to the nails, and to the death of the cross. Consider that whatever Jesus Christ suffered in His life and in His passion, was all placed before Him whilst He was yet in the womb of Mary, and He accepted every thing that was proposed to Him with delight; but in accepting all this, and in overcoming the

natural repugnance of sense, O my God, what anguish and oppression did not the innocent Heart of Jesus suffer! Well did He understand what He was first of all to endure, shut up for nine months in the dark prison of the womb of Mary; in suffering the shame and the sorrows of His birth, being born in a cold grotto that was a stable for beasts; in having afterwards to lead for thirty years a humble life in the shop of an artizan; in considering that He was to be treated by men as ignorant, as a slave, as a seducer, and as one guilty of death, and of the most infamous and painful death that ever was allotted to the most worthless of criminals. All this did our dearest Redeemer accept every moment, but each moment that He accepted it He suffered at once all the pains and humiliations that He would afterwards have to endure even unto death. The very knowledge of His Divine dignity made Him feel still more the injuries that He would have to receive from men: "All the day long my shame is before me" (Ps. xliii. 16). He had continually before His eyes His shame, especially that confusion which He should one day feel at seeing Himself stripped naked, scourged, and suspended by three iron nails; and so to end His life in the midst of the insults and curses of those very men for whom He was to die: "Becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). And for what? To save us miserable and ungrateful sinners.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My beloved Redeemer, oh, how much did it cost Thee, even from Thy first entrance into the world, to raise me from the ruin which I have brought on myself by my sins! Thou hast consented to be treated as the lowest of slaves, in order to deliver me from the slavery of the devil, to whom I had willingly sold myself by sin; and yet, knowing all this, I have had the boldness to afflict continually Thy most amiable Heart, which has loved me so much! But since Thou, who art so innocent, and art my God, hast accepted such a painful life and death, I accept for Thy love, O my Jesus, every trouble that shall come to me from Thy hands. I accept it and embrace it, because it comes

from those hands which were once pierced through, in order to deliver me from the hell which I have so often deserved. Thy love, O my Redeemer, in offering Thyself to suffer so much for me, does more than oblige me to accept for Thy sake every sorrow, every humiliation. O my Lord, for Thy own merit's sake, give me Thy holy love; Thy love will render all sufferings and ignominy sweet and pleasant to me. I love Thee above every thing: I love Thee with my whole heart; I love Thee more than myself. But during Thy whole life how many and what great proofs of Thy love didst Thou not give me; and yet, ungrateful that I am, how many years have I not lived in the world without giving Thee any proofs of my love! I dread appearing before Thee when Thou shalt come to judge me, poor as I now am, without having done any thing for the love of Thee. But what can I do without Thy grace? I can do nothing but pray that Thou wilt succour me; but even this prayer comes simply from Thy grace. O my Jesus, help me through the merits of Thy sufferings, and of the blood Thou hast shed for me. Most holy Mary, recommend me to thy Son, for the love that thou bearest Him. Behold, I am one of those sheep for which thy Son has died.

Meditation III.

"A child is born to us, and a son is given to us."—*Is.* ix. 6.

Consider that after so many centuries, after so many prayers and sighs, the Messias, whom the holy patriarchs and prophets were not worthy to see, whom the nations sighed for, 'the Desire of the eternal hills,' our Saviour, is come; He is already born, and has given Himself entirely to us: "A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us." The Son of God has made Himself little, in order to make us great; He has given Himself to us, in order that we may give ourselves to Him; He is come to show us His love, in order that we may respond to it by giving Him ours. Let us, therefore, receive Him with affection; let us love Him, and have recourse to Him in all our necessities. 'A child gives easily,' says St. Bernard; children readily give any thing that is asked of them.

Jesus came into the world a child, in order to show Himself ready and willing to give us all good gifts: "In whom are hid all treasures" (Coloss. ii. 3). "The Father hath given all things into His hands." If we wish for light, He is come on purpose to enlighten us. If we wish for strength to resist our enemies, He is come to give us comfort. If we wish for pardon and salvation, He is come to pardon and save us. If, in short, we desire the sovereign gift of Divine love, He is come to inflame our hearts with it; and, above all, for this very purpose, He has become a child, and has chosen to show Himself to us worthy of our love, in proportion as He was poor and humble, in order to take away from us all fear, and to gain our affections. 'So,' said St. Peter Chrysologus, 'should He come who willed to drive away fear, and seek for love.'[9] Jesus has besides chosen to come as a little child to make us love Him, not only with an appreciative, but even with a tender love. All infants attract the tender affection of those who behold them; but who will not love, with all the tenderness of which they are capable, a God whom they behold as a little child, in want of milk to nourish Him, trembling with cold, poor, abased, and forsaken, weeping and crying in a manger, and lying on straw? It was this that made the loving St. Francis exclaim: 'Let us love the child of Bethlehem, let us love the child of Bethlehem.' Come, ye souls, and love a God who is become a child, and poor; who is so amiable, and who has come down from heaven to give Himself entirely to you.'

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Oh, my amiable Jesus, whom I have treated with so much contempt, Thou hast descended from heaven to save us from hell, and to give Thyself entirely to us; how can we, then, have so often despised Thee, and turned our backs upon Thee? Oh, my God, how different is the gratitude of men towards their fellow-creatures! If any one makes them a gift, if any one comes from afar to pay them a visit, if any one shows them a particular mark of affection, they cannot forget it, and feel themselves obliged to

repay their benefactors. And yet they are so ungrateful towards Thee, who art their God, and so worthy of their love, and who, for their sake, didst not refuse to give Thy blood and Thy love. But, alas! I have been worse than others in my conduct towards Thee; because I have been more loved by Thee, and more ungrateful towards Thee. Ah, if Thou hadst bestowed those graces with which I have been favoured on a heretic, or an idolator, he would have become a saint; and yet I have done nothing but offend Thee. O my Saviour, I pray Thee, forget the injuries I have committed against Thee! But Thou hast indeed said, that when a sinner repents, Thou rememberest no longer the injuries Thou hast received from him: "All his iniquities I will not remember." If in times past I have not loved Thee, in future I will do nothing else but love Thee. Thou hast given Thyself entirely to me, and I give Thee my whole will; O Lord, I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee; and I will continually repeat to Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee! While I live, I will constantly say this; and when I die, I will yield my last breath with these sweet words on my lips, 'My God, I love Thee;' and from the moment of my entrance into eternity, I will begin to love Thee with a love that shall last for ever, without ever again ceasing to love Thee. And in the meantime, O my Lord, my only good and my only love, I intend to prefer Thy will to every pleasure of my own. Let the whole world offer itself to me, I will refuse it; for I will never cease to love Him that hath loved me so much; I will never again offend Him who deserves from me an infinite love. Do Thou, O my Jesus, aid my desire with Thy grace. O Mary, my Queen, I acknowledge all the graces I have received from God through thy intercession; cease not, then, to intercede for me. Do thou obtain for me perseverance, thou who art the Mother of perseverance.

Meditation IV.

"My sorrow is continually before me."—*Ps.* xxvii. 18.

Consider that in the first moment that the soul of Jesus Christ was created and united to His little body in the

womb of Mary, the Eternal Father intimated to His Son His will that He should die for the redemption of the world; and in this same moment He presented to His view the entire dreadful scene of the sufferings He would have to endure, even unto death, in order to redeem mankind. He brought before Him in that moment all the labours, contempt, and poverty that He would have to suffer during His whole life, as well in Bethlehem, as in Egypt and in Nazareth; and then all the sufferings and ignominy of His passion, the scourges, the thorns, the nails, and the cross; all the weariness, the sadness, the agonies, and the abandonment in which He was to end His life upon Calvary. When Abraham was leading his son to death, he would not afflict him by giving him notice of it beforehand, even during the short time that was necessary for them to arrive at the mount. But the Eternal Father chose that His Incarnate Son, whom He had destined to be the victim of His justice in atonement of our sins, should suffer then all the pains to which He was to be subject during His life and at His death. Wherefore, from the first moment that He was in His mother's womb, Jesus suffered continually that sorrow which He endured in the garden, and which was sufficient to have taken away His life (as He said, "My soul is sorrowful unto death"). So that from that time forth He felt most vividly, and endured the united weight of all the sorrows and contumely that awaited Him. The whole life, then, of our blessed Redeemer, and all the years that He spent, were a life and years of pains and tears: "My life is wasted with grief, and My years in sighs" (Ps. xxx. 11). His Divine Heart never passed one moment free from suffering. Whether He watched or slept, whether He laboured or rested, whether He prayed or spoke, He had continually before His eyes that bitter representation which tormented His holy soul more than all their sufferings tormented the holy martyrs. The martyrs have suffered; but, assisted by grace, they suffered with joy and fervour: Jesus Christ suffered; but He suffered with a heart full of weariness and sorrow; and He accepted all for the love of us.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O sweet, O amiable, O loving Heart of Jesus, even from Thy infancy Thou wert full of bitterness, and Thou didst suffer agonies in the womb of Mary without consolation, and without having any one to look upon Thee and to console Thee by their sympathy. All this Thou didst suffer, O my Jesus, in order to satisfy for the eternal sorrow and agony which I deserved to endure in hell for my sins. Thou didst then suffer, deprived of all relief, to save me, who have had the boldness to forsake God, and to turn my back upon Him, in order to satisfy my miserable inclinations. I thank Thee, O afflicted and loving Heart of my Lord; I thank Thee, and I sympathise with Thee, especially when I see that whilst Thou dost suffer so much for the love of man, these very men do not even pity Thee. O love of God, O ingratitude of man! O men, O men, behold this little innocent lamb who is in agony for you, to satisfy the Divine justice for the injuries you have committed against Him. See how He prays and intercedes for you with His eternal Father; behold Him and love Him. O my Redeemer, how few are those who think on your sorrows and your love. O God, how few are those that love Thee! But unhappy me, for I also have lived so many years in forgetfulness of Thee! Thou hast suffered so much in order to be loved by me, and I have not loved Thee. Forgive me, my Jesus, forgive me, for I will amend my life and love Thee. Ah, wretched me, O Lord, if I still resist Thy grace, and in resisting it damn myself! All the mercies that Thou hast shown me, and above all, Thy sweet voice, which now calls me to love Thee, would be my greatest punishment in hell. My beloved Jesus, have pity on me, let me not live any longer ungrateful to Thy love; give me light, give me strength to conquer every thing, in order to accomplish Thy will. Grant my prayer, I beseech Thee, for the merits of Thy passion. In this is all my confidence, and in thy intercession, O Mary! My dearest Mother, help me; it is thou who hast obtained for me all the favours I have received from God: I bless thee for them; but if thou dost not persevere in helping me, I shall persevere in being faithless, as I have been in times past.

Meditation V.

"He was offered because it was His own will."—*Is.* liii. 7.

The Divine Word, from the first instant that He was made man and an infant in Mary's womb, offered Himself of His own accord to suffer and to die for the ransom of the world: "He was offered because it was His own will." He knew that all the sacrifices of goats and bulls offered to God in times past had not been able to satisfy for the sins of men, but that it required a Divine Person to pay the price of their redemption; wherefore He said, as the Apostle tells us, "When He cometh into the world He saith: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not, but a body Thou hast fitted to me. . . . . Then said I, Behold, I come" (Heb. x. 5). 'My Father,' said Jesus, 'all the victims hitherto offered to Thee have not sufficed, nor could they suffice, to satisfy Thy justice; Thou hast given Me this passible body, in order that by shedding My blood I might appease Thee and save men: 'Behold, I come;' here I am ready. I accept every thing, and I submit Myself in every thing to Thy will.' The inferior part felt repugnance, for it naturally was averse to this life and death, so full of sufferings and shame; but the rational part, which was entirely subordinate to the will of His Father, conquered and accepted every thing; and Jesus began from that moment to suffer all the anguish and sorrows that He would have to suffer during all the years of His life. Thus did our Redeemer act from the very first moment of His entrance into the world. But, O God, how have we conducted ourselves towards Jesus since we began, as adults, to know by the light of faith, the sacred Mysteries of Redemption? What thoughts, what designs, what goods have we loved! Pleasures, amusements, vengeance, sensuality; these are the goods that have engrossed the affections of our hearts. But if we have faith, we must at last change our life and our affections. Let us love a God who has suffered so much for us. Let us represent to ourselves the sufferings which the Heart of Jesus endured

for us, even from His infancy; for then we shall not be able to love any thing else but that Heart which hath loved us so much.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My Lord, wilt Thou know how I have behaved to Thee during all my life? Ever since I began to have the use of reason, I began to despise Thy grace and Thy love. But Thou knowest it much better than I do; nevertheless Thou hast borne with me, because Thou still carest for my welfare. I fled from Thee, and Thou didst follow after and call me. The very same love that made Thee come down from heaven to seek the lost sheep has made Thee bear with me and not forsake me. My Jesus, Thou now seekest me, and I seek Thee. I feel that Thy grace is assisting me: it assists me with the sorrow I feel for my sins, which I abhor above every other evil; it assists me by making me feel a great desire to love Thee and to please Thee. Yea, Lord, I will love Thee and please Thee as much as I can. On one side I feel afraid, it is true, at the thoughts of my frailty and the weakness which I have contracted by my sins; but Thy grace gives me a greater confidence, and causes me to hope in Thy merits; so that I can say, from the bottom of my heart: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me." If I am weak, Thou wilt give me strength against my enemies; if I am infirm, I hope that Thy blood will be my medicine; if I am a sinner, I hope Thou wilt make me a saint. I acknowledge that I have hitherto co-operated to my own ruin, because I have neglected, on dangerous occasions, to have recourse to Thee. But from this day forth, my Jesus and my hope, I will always have recourse to Thee; and from Thee I hope for every assistance and every good. I love Thee above all things, and I will always love Thee alone. Have pity on me, and help me through the merits of all those sufferings which from Thy infancy Thou hast endured for me. Eternal Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ accept of my love. If I have offended Thee, let the tears of the Infant Jesus, who is praying for me, appease Thy wrath: 'Look on the face of Thy Christ.' I do not deserve favours, but this Thy

guiltless Son deserves them, who offers Thee a life of sufferings, in order that Thou mayest be merciful to me. And thou, O Mother of mercy, Mary, cease not to intercede for me. Thou knowest how much I confide in thee; and I know well that thou dost not forsake him that has recourse to thee.

Meditation VI.

"I am become as a man without help, free among the dead."—*Ps.* lxxxvii. 5, 6.

Consider the painful life that Jesus Christ led in the womb of His Mother, and the long confined and dark imprisonment that He suffered there for nine months. Other infants are indeed in the same state; but they do not feel the miseries of it, because they do not know them. But Jesus knew them well, because from the first moment of His life He had the perfect use of reason. He had His senses, but He could not use them; eyes, but He could not see; a tongue, but He could not speak; hands, but He could not stretch them out; feet, but He could not walk;—so that for nine months He had to remain in the womb of Mary like a dead man shut up in the tomb: "I am become as a man without help, free among the dead." He was free, because He had of His own free-will made Himself a prisoner of love in this prison; but love deprived Him of liberty, and bound Him there so fast in chains, that He could not move: 'Free among the dead! oh, great patience of our Saviour!' said St. Ambrose, while He considered the sufferings of Jesus in the womb of Mary. The womb of Mary was, therefore, to our Redeemer a voluntary prison, because it was a prison of love. But it was also not an unjust prison: He was indeed innocent Himself, but He had offered Himself to pay our debts and to satisfy for our crimes. It was therefore only reasonable for the Divine justice to keep Him thus imprisoned, and so begin to exact from Him the due satisfaction. Behold the state to which the Son of God reduces Himself for the love of men; He deprives Himself of His liberty and puts Himself in chains, to deliver us from the

chains of hell. What gratitude and love should we not show in return for the love and goodness of our deliverer and our surety, who, not by compulsion but only out of love, offered Himself to pay, and has paid for us, our debts and our penalties by giving up His divine life! "Forget not the kindness of thy surety; for He hath given His life for thee" (Ecclus. xxix. 19).

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

"Forget not the kindness of thy surety." Yes, my Jesus, the prophet has reason to warn me not to forget the immense favour which Thou hast shown me. I was the debtor, I the criminal, and Thou the innocent one; Thou, O my God, hast chosen to satisfy for my sins by Thy sufferings and Thy death. But after all this kindness I have forgotten Thy favours and Thy love, and I have had the boldness to turn my back upon Thee, as if Thou hadst not been my Lord, and that Lord who has loved me so much. But if in times past I have forgotten Thy mercies, O my dear Redeemer, I will in future never forget them again. Thy sufferings and Thy death shall be the constant subjects of my thoughts, because they will always recall to my mind the love that Thou hast borne me. Cursed be the days in which, forgetting what Thou hast suffered for me, I have made such a bad use of my liberty. Thou hast given it me to love Thee, and I have used it to despise Thee. But I now consecrate entirely to Thee this liberty which Thou hast given me. I beseech Thee, my Saviour, deliver me from the misery of seeing myself again separated from Thee, and again made the slave of Lucifer. I implore Thee to bind my poor soul to Thy feet by Thy holy love, so that it may never again be separated from Thee. Eternal Father, by the imprisonment of the infant Jesus in the womb of Mary, deliver me from the chains of sin and of hell. And thou, O Mother of God, help me! Thou hast in thy womb the Son of God imprisoned and confined; as, therefore, Jesus is thy prisoner, He will do every thing that thou tellest Him. Tell Him to pardon me; tell Him to make me holy. Help me, my Mother, for

the sake of the favour and honour that Jesus Christ conferred upon thee by dwelling within thee for nine months.

Meditation VII.

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."—*St. John* i. 11.

In these days of the holy Nativity St. Francis of Assisi went about the highways and woods with sighs and tears and inconsolable lamentations. When asked the reason, he answered: How should I not weep when I see that love is not loved? I see a God become as it were foolish for the love of man, and man so ungrateful to this God! Now, if this ingratitude of man caused such great sorrow to the heart of St. Francis, let us consider how much more it must have afflicted the Heart of Jesus Christ. He was hardly conceived in the womb of Mary when He saw the cruel return He was to receive from man. He had descended from heaven to enkindle the fire of Divine love, and this desire alone had brought Him down to this earth, to suffer there an abyss of sorrows and ignominies: "I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?" (St. Luke xii. 49.) And then He beheld an abyss of sins which men would commit after having seen so many proofs of His love. It was this, says St. Bernardine of Sienna, which made Him feel an infinite sorrow: 'And therefore He sorrowed infinitely.' Even among us it is an insufferable sorrow for one man to see himself treated with ingratitude by another; for the blessed Simon of Cassia observes, that ingratitude often afflicts the soul more than any pain afflicts the body: 'Ingratitude often causes more bitter sorrow in the soul than pain causes in the body.'[10] What sorrow, then, must our ingratitude have caused to Jesus, who was our God, when He saw that His benefits and His love would be repaid Him by offences and injuries! "And they repaid Me evil for good, and hatred for My love" (Ps. cviii. 5). But even at the present day it seems as if Jesus Christ was going about complaining: "I am become a stranger to My brethren" (Ps. lxviii. 9). For He sees that many neither love nor know Him, as if

He had not done them any good, neither had suffered any thing for love of them. O God, what value do the majority of Christians even now set upon the love of Jesus Christ? Our Blessed Redeemer once appeared to the blessed Henry Suso in the form of a pilgrim who went begging from door to door for a lodging, but every one drove Him away with insults and injuries. How many, alas! are like those of whom Job speaks: "Who said to God, Depart from us. Whereas He had filled their houses with good things" (Job xxii. 17). We have hitherto united ourselves to these ungrateful wretches; but shall we always be like them? No; for that loving Infant does not deserve it, who came from Heaven to suffer and die for us, in order that we might love Him.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Is it, then, true, O my Jesus, that Thou didst descend from heaven to make me love Thee; didst come down to embrace a life of suffering and the death of the cross for my sake, in order that I might welcome Thee into my heart, and yet I have so often driven Thee from me, and said, 'Depart from me, Lord; go away from me, Lord; for I do not want Thee?' O God, if Thou wert not infinite goodness, and hadst not given Thy life to obtain my pardon, I should not have courage to ask it of Thee; but I feel that Thou Thyself dost offer me peace: "Turn ye to me, saith the Lord, and I will turn to you" (Zach. i. 3). Thou Thyself, whom I have offended, O my Jesus, hast made Thyself my intercessor: "He is the propitiation for our sins" (1 St. John ii. 2). I will therefore not do Thee this fresh injury of distrusting Thy mercy. I repent with all my soul of having despised Thee, O sovereign Good; receive me into Thy favour for the sake of the blood which Thou hast shed for me: "Father, I am not worthy to be called Thy son." No, my Redeemer and my Father, I am no longer worthy to be Thy son, having so often renounced Thy love; but Thou dost make me worthy of Thy merits. I thank Thee, oh, my Father; I thank Thee, and I love Thee. Ah, the thought alone of the patience with which Thou hast borne with me for so

many years, and of the favours Thou hast conferred upon me after so many injuries that I have done Thee, ought to make me live constantly on fire with Thy love. Come, then, my Jesus, for I will not drive Thee away any more, come and dwell in my poor heart. I love Thee, and will always love Thee; but do Thou inflame my heart every day more and more by the remembrance of the love Thou hast borne me. O Mary, my Queen and Mother, help me, pray to Jesus for me; make me during the days that are left me in this world live grateful to that God who has loved me so much, even after I have so greatly offended Him.

Meditation VIII.

"The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us that . . . we should live . . . godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."—*Titus* ii. 11.

Consider that by the grace that is said here to have appeared is meant the tender love of Jesus Christ towards men, —a love that we have not merited, which therefore is called "grace." This love was, however, always the same in God, but did not always appear. It was at first promised in many prophecies, and foreshadowed by many figures; but at the birth of the Redeemer this Divine love indeed appeared, and manifested itself by the Eternal Word showing Himself to man as an infant, lying on straw, crying and shivering with cold; beginning thus to make satisfaction for us for the penalties we have deserved, and so making known to us the affection which He bore us, by giving up His life for us: "In this we have known the charity of God, because He hath laid down His life for us" (1 St. John iii. 16). Therefore the love of our God appeared to all, '*omnibus hominibus*.' But why is it, then, that all men have not known it, and that even at this day so many are ignorant of it? This is the reason: "The light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light" (St. John iii. 19). They have not known Him, and they do not know Him, because they do not wish to know Him,

loving rather the darkness of sin than the light of grace. But let us endeavour not to be of the number of these unhappy souls. If in past times we have shut our eyes to the light, thinking little of the love of Jesus Christ, let us try, during the days that may remain to us in this life, to have ever before our eyes the sufferings and death of our Redeemer, in order to love Him who hath loved us so much: "Looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Thus may we justly expect, according to the divine promises, that paradise which Jesus Christ has acquired for us by His blood. At His first coming Jesus appeared as an infant, poor and humble, and showed Himself on earth born in a stable, covered with miserable rags, and lying on straw; but at His second coming He will come on a throne of majesty: "We shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and majesty." Blessed then will he be who shall have loved Him, and miserable those who have not loved Him.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my holy Infant! now I see Thee lying on straw, poor, afflicted, and forsaken; but I know that one day Thou wilt come to judge me, seated on a throne of splendour, and attended by the angels. Forgive me, I implore Thee, before Thou dost judge me. Then Thou wilt have to conduct Thyself as a just judge; but now Thou art my Redeemer, and the Father of mercy. I have been one of those ungrateful ones who have not known Thee, because I did not choose to know Thee; and therefore, instead of being inclined to love Thee by the consideration of the love Thou hast borne me, I have only thought of satisfying my own desires, despising Thy grace and Thy love. But into Thy sacred hands I commend my soul, which I have lost; do Thou save it: "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth" (Ps. xxx. 6). In Thee do I place all my hopes, knowing that, to ransom me from hell, Thou hast given Thy blood and Thy life: "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of

truth." Thou didst not condemn me to death when I was living in sin, but hast waited for me with infinite patience, in order that, having come to myself, I might repent of having offended Thee, and might begin to love Thee, and that thus Thou mightest be able to forgive and save me. Yes, my Jesus, I will please Thee. I repent, above every other evil, of all the offences I have committed against Thee; I repent, and love Thee above all things. Do Thou save me in Thy mercy, and let it be my salvation to love Thee always in this life and in eternity. My dearest Mother Mary, recommend me to thy Son. Do thou represent to Him that I am thy servant, and that I have placed all my hope in thee. He hears thee, and refuses thee nothing.

Meditation IX.

"And Joseph also went up . . . to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child."—*St. Luke* ii. 4.

God had decreed that His Son should be born not in the house of Joseph, but in a cavern and stable of beasts, in the poorest and most painful way that a child can be born; and therefore He caused Cæsar to publish an edict, by which people were commanded to go and enrol themselves, every one in his own city from whence he drew his origin. When Joseph heard this order, he was much agitated as to whether he should take with him or leave behind the Virgin Mother, as she was now so near childbirth. My spouse and my lady, said he to her, on the one hand I do not wish to leave you alone; on the other, if I take you with me, I am much afflicted at the thought of all that you will have to suffer during this long journey, and in such severe weather. My poverty will not permit me to conduct you with that comfort which you require. But Mary answers him, and tries to give him courage with these words: My Joseph, do not fear. I will go with you; the Lord will assist us. She knew, both by divine inspiration, and also because she was well versed in the prophecy of Micheas, that the Divine Infant was to be born in Bethlehem. She therefore takes the swaddling-clothes, and the other miserable garments already prepared, and departs with Joseph. "And Joseph also

went up . . . to be enrolled with Mary." Let us now consider all the devout and holy discourses which these two holy spouses must have held together during this journey concerning the mercy, goodness, and love of the Divine Word, who was shortly to be born, and to appear on the earth for the salvation of men. Let us also consider the praises, the benedictions, the thanksgivings, the acts of humility and love, which these two illustrious pilgrims uttered by the way. This holy Virgin, so soon to become a mother, certainly suffered much in so long a journey, made in the midst of winter, and over rough roads; but she suffered with peace and with love. She offered to God all these her trials, uniting them to those of Jesus, whom she carried in her womb. Oh, let us unite ourselves also, and let us accompany Mary and Joseph in the journey of our life; and, with them, let us accompany the King of Heaven, who is born in a cave, and makes His first appearance in the world as an infant, but as the poorest and most forsaken infant that ever was born amongst men. And let us beseech Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, that, through the merits of the pains which they suffered in this journey, they would accompany us in the journey that we are making to eternity. Oh, blessed shall we be if, in life and in death, we keep company with, and are always accompanied by, these three great personages!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My beloved Redeemer, I know that in this journey Thou wast accompanied by hosts of angels from heaven; but on this earth who was there that bore Thee company? Thou hadst but Joseph and Mary who carried Thee with her. Refuse not, O my Jesus, that I also accompany Thee. Miserable ungrateful sinner that I have been, I now see the injuries I have done Thee; Thou didst come down from heaven to make Thyself my companion on earth, and I by my frequent offences have ungratefully abandoned Thee! When I remember, O my Saviour, that for the sake of my own cursed inclinations I have often separated myself from Thee and renounced Thy friendship, I could wish to die of sorrow. But Thou didst come into the

world to forgive me; therefore forgive me now, I beseech Thee, for I repent with all my soul of having so often turned my back upon Thee and forsaken Thee. I purpose and hope, through Thy grace, never more to leave or separate myself from Thee, O my only love! My soul has become enamoured of Thee, O my amiable Infant God. I love Thee, my sweet Saviour; and since Thou hast come upon earth to save me and to dispense to me Thy graces, I ask this one only grace of Thee, permit me not to be ever again separated from Thee. Unite me, bind me to Thyself, enchain me with the sweet cords of Thy holy love. O my Redeemer and my God, who will then have the heart to leave Thee, and to live without Thee, deprived of Thy grace? Most holy Mary, I come to accompany thee in this journey; and thou, O my Mother, cease not to accompany me in the journey that I am making to eternity. Do thou assist me always, but especially when I shall find myself at the end of my life, and near that moment on which will depend either my remaining always with thee to love Jesus in paradise, or my being for ever separated from thee and hating Jesus in hell. My Queen, save me by thy intercession; and may my salvation be to love thee and Jesus for ever, in time and in eternity. Thou art my hope; I hope every thing from thee.

ANOTHER NOVENA FOR CHRISTMAS:

CONSISTING OF

NINE MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY OF THE NOVENA.

CHAPLET TO BE RECITED BEFORE EVERY MEDITATION.

1. My most sweet Jesus, who wert born in a cave and wert afterwards laid in a manger upon straw, have mercy upon us. *R.* Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy upon us. Our Father. Hail Mary. Glory be to the Father, &c.

2. My most sweet Jesus, who wert presented and offered by Mary in the temple, to be afterwards one day sacrificed for us upon the cross, have mercy upon us. *R.* Have mercy, &c.

3. My most sweet Jesus, who wert persecuted by Herod and constrained to fly into Egypt, have mercy upon us. *R.* Have mercy, &c.

4. My most sweet Jesus, who didst dwell in Egypt for seven years, poor, unknown, and despised by that barbarous nation, have mercy upon us. *R.* Have mercy, &c.

5. My most sweet Jesus, who didst return to Thy country to be one day crucified there in the midst of two thieves, have mercy upon us. *R.* Have mercy, &c.

6. My most sweet Jesus, who at the age of twelve years didst remain in the temple to dispute with the doctors, and after three days wert found by Mary, have mercy upon us. *R.* Have mercy, &c.

7. My most sweet Jesus, who didst live concealed from the world for so many years in the shop at Nazareth, serving Mary and Joseph, have mercy upon us. *R.* Have mercy, &c.

8. My most sweet Jesus, who for three years before

Thy Passion didst go about preaching and teaching the way of salvation, have mercy upon us. *R.* Have mercy, &c.

9. My most sweet Jesus, who for the love of us didst terminate Thy life by dying on the cross, have mercy upon us. *R.* Have mercy, &c.

Meditation I.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD IN BECOMING MAN.

Let us consider the immense love which God show d us in becoming man in order to procure us eternal life. Our first parent, Adam, having sinned and rebelled against God, was driven out of Paradise and condemned to everlasting death with all his descendants. But behold the Son of God, who, seeing man thus lost, in order to deliver him from death offers to take upon Himself human flesh, and to die condemned as a malefactor upon the cross. But, my Son, we may suppose the Father saying to Him, consider what a life of humiliation and suffering Thou wilt have to lead upon earth. Thou wilt have to be born in a cold cave, and to be laid in a manger for beasts. Thou wilt have to fly as an infant into Egypt to escape from the hands of Herod. On Thy return from Egypt Thou wilt have to live in a shop as a humble servant, poor and despised. And, finally, worn out by sufferings, Thou wilt have to give up Thy life upon a cross, insulted and forsaken by all.—Father, all this matters not, replies the Son ; I am content with enduring all, provided man is saved. What should we say if a prince was to take compassion upon a dead worm, and chose to become a worm himself, and, making as it were a bath of his own blood, to die in order to restore the worm to life? But the eternal Word has done even more than this for us ; for, being God, He has chosen to become a worm like us, and to die for us, in order to purchase for us the life of divine grace which we had lost. When He saw that all the gifts He had bestowed upon us could not secure to Him our love, what did He do? He became man, and He gave Himself entirely to us : "The Word was made flesh, and gave Himself for us." Man, by despising God,

says St. Fulgentius, separated himself from God; but God, through His love for man, came from heaven to seek him. And why did He come? He came in order that man might know how much God loved him, and that thus, out of gratitude, at least he might love Him in return. Even the beasts when they approach themselves to us make us love them; and why then are we so ungrateful towards a God who descends from heaven to earth to make us love Him? One day, when a priest was saying these words in Mass: "*Et Verbum caro factum est*," a man who was present neglected to make an act of reverence; upon which the devil gave him a blow, saying: 'Ah, ungrateful man! if God had done as much for me as He has done for thee, I should remain with my face always bent down to the ground returning thanks to Him.'

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O great Son of God, Thou hast become man in order to make Thyself loved by men; but where is the love that men bear to Thee? Thou hast given Thy blood and Thy life to save our souls; and why are we so ungrateful to Thee, that, instead of loving Thee, we despise with such ingratitude? Alas! I myself, Lord, have been one of those who more than others have thus ill-treated Thee. But Thy Passion is my hope. Oh, for the sake of that love that induced Thee to assume human flesh, and to die for me upon the cross; forgive me all the offences I have committed against Thee. I love Thee, O Incarnate Word; I love Thee, O my God; I love Thee, O Infinite Goodness; and I repent of all the injuries I have done Thee. Would that I could die of sorrow for Thee. O my Jesus, grant me the gift of Thy love; let me not live any longer ungrateful for the affection Thou hast borne me. I am determined to love Thee always. Give me holy perseverance. O Mary, Mother of God, and my Mother, obtain for me from thy Son the grace to love Him always even unto death.

Meditation II.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD IN BEING BORN AN INFANT.

The Son of God, in becoming man for our sake, might have appeared in the world at the age of a perfect man, as Adam appeared when he was created; but, as children generally attract to themselves greater love from those who take care of them, therefore He chose to appear upon earth as an infant; and as the poorest and most abject infant that ever was born. St. Peter Chrysologus writes: 'Thus did our God choose to be born; because thus did He wish to be loved.' The Prophet Isaias had already predicted that the Son of God was to be born an infant, and thus to give Himself entirely to us through the love that He bore us: "A Child is born to us, a Son is given to us" (Is. xi. 6).

O my Jesus, my supreme and true God, what can have attracted Thee from heaven to be born in a cave, if it be not the love that Thou bearest to man? What has drawn Thee from the bosom of Thy Father to lay Thyself down in a manger? What has brought Thee down from Thy throne above the stars, to stretch Thyself on a little straw? What, from the midst of the nine choirs of angels, has placed Thee between two animals? Thou dost inflame the seraphim with holy fire, and lo, Thou art trembling with cold in this stable! Thou dost give motion to the heavens and the sun, and now Thou canst not move without being carried in some one's arms! Thou dost provide with food both man and beast, and dost Thou now require a little milk to sustain Thy life? Thou art the delight of heaven, and now how is it that I hear Thee weep and moan? Tell me who hath reduced Thee to such misery? 'Who hath done this? Love hath done it,' says St. Bernard; the love that Thou bearest to man hath done it.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O dearest Infant, tell me what Thou camest on earth to do? Tell me whom Thou art seeking? Ah, I understand Thee now; Thou art come in order to die for me, to deliver me from hell. Thou art come to seek me, a lost

sheep, in order that I may no more fly from Thee, but love Thee. Ah, my Jesus, my treasure, my life, my love, my all; if I do not love Thee, whom then shall I love? Where can I find a father, a friend, a spouse more amiable than Thou, and who has loved me more than Thou hast done? I am sorry to have been so many years in the world, and yet not to have loved Thee; yea, rather to have offended and despised Thee. Forgive me, O my beloved Redeemer; for I repent of having treated Thee thus; I am sorry for it with all my heart. Pardon me, and give me Thy grace, that I may never again separate myself from Thee, and that I may love Thee constantly during the years that remain to me in this life. My Love, I give myself entirely to Thee; accept me, and do not reject me, though I deserve it. O Mary, thou art my advocate; thou dost obtain by thy prayers whatever thou wilt from thy Son; beg of Him to forgive me, and to give me holy perseverance unto death.

Meditation III.

On the life of poverty which Jesus led even from His birth.

It was ordained by God, that at the time when His Son was born on this earth the decree of the emperor should be promulgated, obliging every one to go and enrol themselves in the place of their birth. And thus it happened, that Joseph had to go with his spouse to Bethlehem to enrol himself according to the decree of Cæsar. And now, the time of her delivery having arrived, Mary, having been driven from the other houses, and even from the common asylum for the poor, was obliged to remain that night in a cave, and there brought forth the King of Heaven. It is true that, if Jesus had been born in Nazareth, He would equally have been born in a state of poverty; but then He would at least have had a dry room, a little fire, warm clothes, and a more comfortable cradle. But no, He chose to be born in this cold cavern without a fire to warm Him; He chose to have a manger for a cradle, and a little prickly straw for a bed, in order that He might suffer more.

Let us, then, enter into the cave of Bethlehem; but let us enter there with faith. If we go there without faith, we shall see nothing but a poor infant, who moves us to compassion at beholding him so beautiful, shivering and crying with cold, and with the prickling of the straw on which He lies. But if we enter in with faith, and consider that this Child is the Son of God, who for the love of us has come down to this earth and suffered so much to pay the penalty of our sins, how can it be possible not to thank Him and love Him?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my sweet Infant! how is it possible that, knowing how much Thou hast suffered for me, I can have been so ungrateful to Thee, and offended Thee so often? But these tears which thou sheddest, this poverty which Thou hast chosen for the love of me, make me hope for the pardon of all the offences I have committed against Thee. I repent, my Jesus, of having so often turned my back upon Thee; and I love Thee above all things, 'my God and my All.' My God, from this day forth Thou shalt be my only treasure and my only good. I will say to Thee, with St. Ignatius of Loyola, 'Give me Thy love, give me Thy grace, and I am sufficiently rich.' I wish for, I desire nothing else. Thou alone art sufficient for me, my Jesus, my Life, my Love.

Meditation IV.

ON THE LIFE OF HUMILITY WHICH JESUS LED EVEN FROM HIS INFANCY.

All the marks that the angel gave to the shepherds to find the Saviour, who was just born, were marks of humility: "And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger" (St. Luke ii. 12). This shall be the sign, said the angel, to find the new-born Messias: you will find Him an infant, wrapped in poor ragged clothes, in a stable, lying on straw in a manger for animals. Thus would the King of Heaven, the Son of God, be born, because He came to destroy the pride which had been the cause of man's ruin. The

prophets had already foretold that our Redeemer should be treated as the vilest man upon earth, and overwhelmed with insults. How much contempt had not Jesus to suffer from men! He was treated as a drunkard, as a magician, as a blasphemer, and a heretic. How many affronts did He endure during His Passion! He was forsaken by His own disciples; even one of them sold Him for thirty pieces of silver, and another denied having ever known Him. He was led through the streets bound like a criminal, scourged like a slave, treated like a madman, as a mock king; struck, spit upon in the face; and at length He was put to death on a cross, suspended between two thieves, as the greatest malefactor in the world. Thus, says St. Bernard, the noblest of men is treated like the vilest of all. 'But, my Jesus,' adds the saint, 'the viler Thou art, the dearer art Thou to me.' The more Thou appearest to me humbled and despised, the more dear and worthy of love dost Thou become to me.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my sweet Saviour! Thou hast embraced so much contempt for the love of me, and I have not been able to bear a word of insult without thinking immediately of revenging myself of it,—I who so often have deserved to be trodden under foot by the devils in hell! I am ashamed of appearing before Thee, a proud sinner that I am. O Lord, do not drive me from Thy presence, as I deserve. Thou hast said that Thou couldest not despise a heart that repents and humbles itself: I repent of all the offences I have committed against Thee. Forgive me, my Jesus; for I will not offend Thee any more. Thou hast suffered so many injuries for my sake, I will for Thy sake bear with all the injuries that may be offered me. I love Thee, my Jesus, despised for my sake; I love Thee, my Good, above every other good. Give me Thy help, that I may always love Thee, and suffer every insult for the love of Thee. O Mary, recommend me to thy Son; pray to Jesus for me.

Meditation V.

On the life of sorrow which Jesus led even from His birth.

Jesus Christ could have saved man without suffering and without dying; but no, He chose a life full of tribulations, in order to make us know how much He loved us. Therefore the prophet Isaias called Him the Man of sorrows (*'Virum dolorum'*), because the life of Jesus Christ was to be a life full of sorrows. His Passion did not commence at the time of His death, but from the commencement of His life. Behold Him, as soon as He is born, laid in a stable, where for Jesus every thing is a torment. His sight is tormented by seeing nothing else in this cave but black rough walls. His sense of smelling is tormented by the stench of the dung of the beasts that are lying there. His sense of touch is tormented by the pricking of the straw that serves Him for a bed. Soon after His birth He is obliged to fly into Egypt, where He passed several years of His childhood poor and despised; the life which He led afterwards in Nazareth was not much better. Behold Him at length terminating His life in Jerusalem, dying on a cross by dint of torments.

Thus, then, the life of Jesus was one continual suffering, and indeed a double suffering; for He had constantly before His eyes all the sorrows that would afflict Him until the day of His death. Sister Mary Magdalene Orsini, complaining one day before the crucifix, said to Him: 'O Lord, Thou didst remain on the cross for three hours, but I have suffered this pain for several years.' But Jesus answered her: 'Oh, ignorant that thou art, what dost thou say? I suffered even from My Mother's womb all the pains of My life and My death.' But all these sufferings did not so much afflict Jesus Christ—because He chose voluntarily to suffer them—as did the sight of our sins and our ingratitude for His great love. St. Margaret of Cortona was never satisfied with lamenting over the offences committed against God; wherefore her confessor said to her one day: 'Margaret, cease crying, because God has already forgiven thee.' But she replied: 'Ah, father, how

can I cease crying, when I know that my sins kept Jesus Christ in a state of affliction all His life?'

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my sweet Love, have I then by my sins kept Thee in a state of affliction all Thy life long? Oh, tell me, then, what I can do, in order that Thou mayest forgive me; for I will leave nothing undone. I repent, O sovereign Good, of all the offences I have committed against Thee; I repent, and love Thee more than myself. I feel a great desire to love Thee; it is Thou that givest me this desire; give me, therefore, strength to love Thee ardently. It is only just that I, who have offended Thee so much, should also love Thee much. Oh, remind me constantly of the love Thou hast borne me, in order that my soul may always burn with the love of Thee; that it may think of Thee alone, desire Thee alone, and strive to please Thee alone. O God of love, I, who once was the slave of hell, now give myself entirely to Thee. Accept me in Thy mercy, and bind me with Thy love, my Jesus, from this day forth. I will love Thee in life; and in loving Thee I will die. O Mary, my Mother and my hope, help me to love thy dear Jesus and mine; this favour alone I desire and hope from thee.

Meditation VI.

ON THE MERCY OF GOD IN COMING DOWN FROM HEAVEN TO SAVE US BY HIS DEATH.

St. Paul says: "The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared" (Tit. iii. 4). When therefore the Son of God made Man appeared upon earth, then was seen how great the goodness of God was towards us. St. Bernard writes, that the power of God appeared first in the creation of the world, and His wisdom in sustaining it; but His mercy appeared to a still greater degree when He took human flesh to save lost man by His sufferings and death. And what greater mercy could the Son of God show us, than to take upon Him the pains we have deserved? Behold Him a new-born infant, weak, and wrapped in swaddling-clothes in a manger; not able either to

move or feed Himself, He requires for His sustenance that Mary should feed Him with a little milk. Behold Him afterwards in the judgment-hall of Pilate, bound to a column by cords from which He cannot loosen Himself, and there scourged from head to foot. Behold Him in the journey to Calvary, falling down as He goes along the road through weakness and the weight of the cross that He carries. Behold Him finally nailed to that infamous tree, whereon He finishes His life by dint of suffering.

Jesus Christ wished to gain all the affections of our hearts by His love for us, and therefore He would not send an angel to redeem us, but He would come Himself to save us by His Passion. If an angel had been our redeemer, man must have divided his heart, loving God as his Creator, and the angel as his redeemer; but God, who desired the whole heart of man, as He was His Creator, chose also to be His Redeemer.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Ah, my dear Redeemer, where should I be now, if Thou hadst not borne with me with so much patience, but hadst condemned me to death whilst I was yet in sin? Since then Thou hast hitherto waited for me, my Jesus, forgive me speedily, before death surprises me whilst I am guilty of so many offences against Thee. I repent, O sovereign Good, of having thus despised Thee; I should like to die of sorrow for my sins. Thou canst not forsake a soul that seeks Thee; if I have hitherto neglected Thee, I will henceforth seek Thee and love Thee. Yes, O my God, I love Thee above all things; I love Thee more than myself. Help me, Lord, to love Thee always during the remainder of my life; I ask nothing more; I ask this, and I hope it of Thee. Mary, my hope, do thou pray for me; if thou prayest for me, I am sure of grace.

Meditation VII.

ON THE JOURNEY OF THE INFANT JESUS TO EGYPT.

The Son of God came from heaven to save mankind; but as soon as He was born, they began to persecute Him

even until death. Herod, fearing that this Infant would deprive him of his kingdom, tried to put Him to death; wherefore St. Joseph was advised by the angel in a dream to take Jesus with His Mother and to fly into Egypt. Joseph promptly obeyed, and informed Mary of it; so he took the few implements of his trade that he possessed, in order that they might serve him to gain a livelihood in Egypt for himself and his poor family. Mary, on her part, added a small packet of clothes that were to serve for the Holy Infant; and then, drawing near to the crib she said with tears to her sleeping child: 'Oh, my Son and my God, Thou art come down from heaven to save men, and hardly art Thou born when they seek Thee to take away Thy life.' She then took Him, and continuing to weep, in the same night she and Joseph set off on their journey.

Let us consider how much these holy pilgrims must have suffered whilst they were making such a long journey, deprived of every comfort. The Infant was not yet able to walk; therefore, first Mary and then Joseph were obliged by turns to carry Him in their arms. During their journey through the desert of Egypt, their only bed at night was the bare earth in the open air. The Infant weeps with the cold, and Joseph and Mary weep also from compassion. And who would not weep, in seeing the Son of God, poor and persecuted, wandering about on the earth that He may not be killed by His enemies?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Ah, dearest Infant, Thou dost weep; and well mayest Thou weep, in seeing Thyself so persecuted by those men whom Thou hast so much loved. Alas, my God, I also have persecuted Thee by my sins; but now I love Thee more than myself; and there is no sorrow that afflicts me more than the remembrance that I have despised Thee, my sovereign Good. Oh, forgive me, my Jesus, and permit me to carry Thee with me in my heart in all the journey of life that I have yet to make, and then to enter together with Thee into eternity. I have so often driven Thee from my soul by offending Thee; but now I love

Thee above every thing, and I repent above every other evil of having offended Thee. My beloved Lord, I will never leave Thee more; but do Thou give me strength to resist temptations; permit me not to separate myself any more from Thee; let me rather die than ever again lose Thy favour. O Mary, my hope, make me always live and die in the love of God.

Meditation VIII.

On the sojourn of the Infant Jesus in Egypt and in Nazareth.

Our Blessed Redeemer passed His first infancy in Egypt, leading there for seven years a life of poverty and contempt. Joseph and Mary were both strangers and unknown there, having there neither relations nor friends; and they could hardly earn their daily bread by the labour of their hands. Their cottage was poor, their bed was poor, and their food was poor. In this miserable hut Mary weaned Jesus. First she had fed Him from her breast; and afterwards with her hands she took from the porringer a little bread soaked in water, and then she put it in the sacred mouth of her Son. In this cottage she made Him His first little garment; she took off His swaddling-clothes and began to dress Him. In this cottage the Child Jesus began to take His first steps; but He kept falling many times and trembling, as it happens to other children. Here He began to utter His first words, but in stammering. O wonder! to what has not a God reduced Himself for the love of us! A God trembling and falling as He walks! a God stammering whilst He speaks!

Not unlike this was the poor and abject life that Jesus led on His return from Egypt to the house of Nazareth. Until the age of thirty He held no other office than that of a simple shop-boy, being obedient to Joseph and Mary. "And He was subject to them" (St. Luke ii. 51). Jesus went to fetch the water; Jesus opened and shut up the shop; Jesus swept the house; He collected the fragments of wood for the fire, and worked all day, helping Joseph in his labours. O wonder! A God serving as a boy!

a God sweeping the house! a God working and sweating to plane a piece of wood! And who is this? The omnipotent God, who by a nod created the world, and can destroy it when He pleases! Ought not the mere thought of this to move our hearts to love Him? How sweet it must have been to observe the devotion with which Jesus said His prayers, the patience with which He laboured, the promptitude with which He obeyed, the modesty with which He took His food, and the sweetness and affability with which He spoke and conversed! Oh, every word, every action of Jesus was so holy, that it filled every one with love for Him; but especially Mary and Joseph, who were constantly observing Him!

Meditation IX.

On the Birth of the Infant Jesus in the Cave of Bethlehem.

The edict of the Roman emperor having gone forth, by which every one was to go and enrol themselves in their own country, Joseph departed with his spouse Mary, to go and enrol themselves in Bethlehem. O God! how much must the Blessed Virgin have suffered in this journey, which was of four days, over mountainous roads, and in the winter, with cold, wind, and rain! As soon as they arrived there, the time of her delivery was at hand; wherefore Joseph went about the town looking for a lodging, where Mary could bring forth her child. But, because they are poor, they are driven away by every one; they are even driven from the inn where the other poor had been received. They went away therefore from the town in the night; and having found a cave, Mary entered in there. But Joseph said to her: 'My spouse, how can you pass the night in this damp cold place? Do you not see that this is a stable for animals?' But Mary answered: 'O my Joseph! it is nevertheless true that this shed is the royal palace in which the Son of God chooses to be born.' And behold, the hour of the birth being come, whilst the Holy Virgin was kneeling in prayer, she saw all at once the cave illuminated by a brilliant light; she cast her eyes

upon the ground, and beheld the Son of God already born, a tender infant, crying and trembling with cold: whereupon she first adores Him as her God; she then places Him in her bosom, and wraps Him in the poor swaddling-clothes which she had with her; and finally, she lays Him on a little straw in the manger. Behold, how the Son of the Eternal Father chose to be born for the love of us. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi says that the souls enamoured of Jesus Christ ought to kneel in spirit at the feet of the Holy Child, and perform for Him the same office that the beasts of the stable of Bethlehem did, which warmed Jesus with their breath; they should, therefore, warm Him also with the sighs of love.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my adorable Infant, I should not have the boldness to prostrate myself at Thy feet, if I did not know that Thou Thyself invitest me to approach Thee. I am he who by my sins have caused Thee to shed so many tears in the stable of Bethlehem. But since Thou camest upon earth to forgive repentant sinners, forgive me also; for I repent with all my heart of having despised Thee, my Saviour, my God, who art so good, and hast loved me so much. Thou dost dispense great graces to so many souls during this sacred night; do Thou, therefore, console my soul also. The grace I desire is the grace to love Thee from this day forth with my whole heart. Oh, inflame me wholly with Thy holy love! I love Thee, my God, become a child for me. Oh, permit me not ever to cease from loving thee. O Mary, my Mother, thou canst do all things by thy prayers; I ask thee only this, to pray to Jesus for me.

MEDITATIONS

FOR THE OCTAVE OF THE NATIVITY, AND FOR THE FOLLOWING DAYS UNTIL THE EPIPHANY.

MEDITATION I.

ON THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

THE birth of Jesus Christ caused a universal joy to the whole world. He was the Redeemer who had been desired and sighed after for so many years; and therefore He was called the desired of the nations, and the desire of the eternal hills. Behold Him already come, and born in a little cave. Let us consider that this day the angel announces to us also the same great joy which he announced to the shepherds: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour" (St. Luke ii. 10, 11).

What rejoicing is there in a country when the first-born son is born to the king! But surely we ought to keep still greater festival when we see the Son of God born and come down from heaven to visit us, urged to this by the bowels of His mercy: "Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us." We were lost; and behold Him who came to save us: "He came down from heaven for our salvation." Behold the Shepherd who came to save His sheep from death by giving His life for their sakes: "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep" (St. John x. 11). Behold the Lamb of God, who came to sacrifice Himself to obtain for us the Divine favour, and to become our deliverer, our life, our light, and even our food in the most Holy Sacrament. St. Augustine says, that for this reason,

amongst others, Christ chose to be laid in the manger where the animals were fed, to make us understand that He has become man also to make Himself our food: 'In the manger, where the food of animals is placed, He allowed His limbs to be laid, thereby showing that His own body would be the eternal food of men.'[11] Besides this, He is born every day in the Sacrament by means of the priests and the words of consecration; the altar is the crib, and there we go to feed ourselves on His flesh. Some one might desire to have the Holy Infant in his arms, as the aged Simeon had; but faith teaches us that, when we receive Communion, the same Jesus who was in the manger of Bethlehem is not only in our arms, but in our breasts. He was born for this purpose, to give Himself entirely to us: "A child is born to us, a son is given to us" (Is. ix. 6).

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

"I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; seek Thy servant" (Ps. cxviii. 176). O Lord, I am that sheep which, by following after my own pleasures and caprices, have miserably lost myself; but Thou, who art at once the Shepherd and Divine Lamb, art He who camest down from heaven to save me by sacrificing Thyself as a victim on the cross in satisfaction for my sins. "Behold the Lamb of God; behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." If therefore I desire to amend my life, what need I fear? why should I not confide entirely in Thee, O my Saviour, who wert born on purpose to save me? "Behold, God is my Saviour; I will put my trust in Him, and will not fear." What greater proof couldst Thou give me of Thy mercy, O my dearest Redeemer, to inspire me with confidence, than to give me Thyself? O my dear Infant, how grieved am I that I have offended Thee! I have made Thee weep in the stable of Bethlehem. But since Thou art come to seek me, I throw myself at Thy feet; and although I behold Thee afflicted and humbled, lying upon straw in the manger, I acknowledge Thee for my supreme King and Sovereign. I feel that Thy tender infant-cries invite me to love Thee, and demand my heart.

Behold it, my Jesus; I present it to-day at Thy feet; change it and inflame it, O Thou who didst come into the world to inflame the hearts of men with Thy holy love. I feel as if I heard Thee say to me in Thy manger: "Love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart." And I will answer: Ah, my Jesus, if I do not love Thee, who art my Lord and my God, whom shall I love? Thou callest Thyself mine, because Thou wert born in order to give Thyself entirely to me; and shall I refuse to be Thine? No, my beloved Lord, I give myself entirely to Thee; and I love Thee with my whole heart. I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee, O sovereign Good, the one only love of my soul. I beseech Thee accept me this day, and permit me not evermore to cease loving Thee. O Mary, my Queen, I pray thee, through that consolation which thou didst enjoy the first time thou didst behold thy new-born Son and didst give Him thy first kiss, beseech Him to accept me for His servant, and to enchain me for ever to Himself by the gift of His holy love.

Meditation II.

JESUS IS BORN AN INFANT.

Consider that the first sign which the angel gave to the shepherds, whereby they might discover the new-born Messias, was that they would find Him under the form of an infant: "You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger" (St. Luke ii. 12). The littleness of infants is a great attraction for love; but a still greater attraction must the littleness of the Infant Jesus be to us, who, being the incomprehensible God, has made Himself small for the love of us: 'For our sakes He became a little child.'[12] Adam came into the world at a full age; but the Eternal Word chose to appear as an infant—"a child is born to us,"—that He might thus attract our hearts to Himself with greater force: 'so would He be born, who willed to be loved' He came not into the world to inspire terror, but to be loved; and for this reason He preferred to show Himself at His first appearance as a tender, weak infant. 'Our Lord is great, and

greatly to be praised,' said St. Bernard.[13] My Lord is great, and therefore He deserves highly to be praised for His divine majesty. But when the Saint considered Him as a little child in the stable of Bethlehem, he exclaimed with tenderness, 'My Lord is a little child, and greatly to be loved.' My great and supreme God has made Himself little for my sake. Ah, how is it possible that any one can reflect with faith on a God become a little child, crying and wailing on the straw in a cave, and yet not love Him, and invite all men to love Him, as did St. Francis of Assisi, who said, 'Let us love the Child of Bethlehem, let us love the Child of Bethlehem.' He is an infant; He does not speak, He only cries; but, O my God, are not these cries all voices of love, with which He invites us to love Him, and demands our hearts! Let us consider, besides, that infants also gain our affections because we consider them innocent: but all other infants are born with the infection of original sin; Jesus was born an infant, but He was born holy; 'holy, innocent, unpolluted.' My beloved, says the holy spouse, is all ruddy with love, and all white with innocence, without a spot of any sin: "My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen out of thousands" (Cant. v. 10). In this Infant did the Eternal Father find His delight, because, as St. Gregory says, 'in Him alone He found no fault.' Let us miserable sinners comfort ourselves, because this Divine Infant has come down from heaven to communicate His innocence to us by means of His Passion. His merits, if we only know how to apply them to ourselves, can change us from sinners into innocents and saints: in these merits let us place all our confidence; through them let us continually ask for graces from the Eternal Father, and we shall obtain every thing.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Eternal Father, I, a miserable sinner, worthy of hell, have nothing of my own to offer Thee in satisfaction for my sins; I offer Thee the tears, the sufferings, the blood, the death of this Infant, who is Thy Son; and through them I implore pity from Thee. If I had not this Son to offer Thee, I should be lost; there would be no longer any

hope for me; but Thou hast given Him to me for this purpose, in order that, in offering Thee His merits, I might have a good hope of my salvation. My ingratitude, O Lord, is great; but Thy mercy is still greater. And what greater mercy could I hope for from Thee, than that Thou shouldest give me Thy own Son for my Redeemer, and for the victim of my sins? For the love, therefore, of Jesus Christ, forgive me all the offences that I have committed against Thee, of which I repent with my whole heart, because by them I have offended Thee, O infinite Goodness. And for the sake of Jesus Christ, I ask of Thee holy perseverance. O my God, if I should again offend Thee, after Thou hast waited for me with so much patience; after Thou hast assisted me with so much light, and forgiven me with so much love,—I should indeed deserve a special hell for myself. O my Father, do not forsake me, I pray Thee. I tremble when I think of the number of times that I have betrayed Thee; how many times have I promised to love Thee, and then have again turned my back upon Thee? O my Creator, let me not have to lament the misfortune of seeing myself again deprived of Thy favour: 'Permit me not to be separated from Thee; permit me not to be separated from Thee.' I repeat it, and will repeat it to my very last breath; and do Thou always give me the grace to repeat to Thee this prayer: 'Permit me not to be separated from Thee.' My Jesus, my dearest Infant, enchain me with Thy love. I love Thee, and will always love Thee. Permit me not to be ever again separated from Thy love. I love thee too, my Mother; O, do thou also love me. And if thou lovest me, this is the favour I beg thee to obtain for me, that I may never cease to love my God.

Meditation III.

JESUS IN SWADDLING-CLOTHES.

Imagine that you see Mary, having now brought forth her Son, taking Him with reverence in her arms, adoring Him as her God, and then wrapping Him up in swaddling-clothes: "she wrapped Him up in swaddling-clothes" (St.

Luke ii. 7). The Holy Church says the same: 'His limbs, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, the Virgin Mother binds.' Behold the Infant Jesus, who obediently offers His little hands and feet, and allows Himself to be swaddled. Consider how that every time the Holy Infant allowed Himself to be swathed, He thought of the cords with which He should one day be bound and led captive in the garden, and of those also with which He should be tied to the column, and of the nails which should fasten Him to the cross; and thinking on these things, He willingly allowed Himself to be bound, in order to deliver our souls from the chains of hell. Bound, then, in these swaddling-clothes, and turning towards us, Jesus invites us to unite ourselves to Him with the holy bonds of love. And turning to His Eternal Father, He says: My Father, men have abused their liberty, and by rebelling against Thee have made themselves the slaves of sin; but I will make satisfaction for their disobedience, and will be bound and confined in these swaddling-clothes. Bound with these, I offer Thee My liberty, in order that man may be delivered from the slavery of the devil. I accept these swaddling-clothes; they are dear to Me, because they are the symbols of the cords with which, from this moment forth, I offer Myself to be one day bound and led to death for the salvation of men: "His bands are a healthful binding" (Eccl. vi. 31). The bands of Jesus were the healthful binding, to heal the wounds of our souls. Therefore, O my Jesus, Thou wouldest be bound in swaddling-clothes for the love of me. 'O Love, how great is thy bond, which could bind a God!'[14] O Divine Love, Thou alone couldest make my God Thy prisoner. And shall I then, O Lord, refuse to allow myself to be bound by Thy holy love? Shall I for the future have the courage to detach myself from Thy sweet and amiable chains? And for what? To make myself a slave of hell? O my Lord, Thou remainest bound up in this manger for the love of me; I desire always to remain bound to Thee. St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi said that the bands that we ought to take should be a firm resolution of uniting ourselves to God by means of love; detaching ourselves at the same time from all affection for any thing that is not God. For

this reason also it seems that our loving Jesus has allowed Himself to be (as it were) bound and made a prisoner in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, under the sacramental species, in order that He might behold His beloved souls made also prisoners of His love.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

And what fear can I have of Thy chastisement, O my beloved Infant, now that I see Thee bound in the swaddling-clothes, depriving Thyself (as it were) of the power of raising Thy hands to punish me? Thou dost give me to understand by these bands that Thou wilt not chastise me, if I will detach myself from the chains of my vices, and bind myself to Thee. Yes, my Jesus, I will bind myself. I repent with all my heart of having separated myself from Thee, by abusing that liberty which Thou hast given me. Thou dost offer me a more desirable liberty; a liberty which delivers me from the chains of the devil, and places me among the children of God. Thou hast given Thyself up to be imprisoned in these swaddling-clothes for the love of me; I will be in future a prisoner of Thy infinite love. O blessed chains, O beautiful emblems of salvation, which bind souls to God, bind also my poor heart; but bind it so fast, that it may never in future be able to disengage itself from the love of this sovereign Good. My Jesus, I love Thee; I bind myself to Thee; I give Thee my whole heart, my whole will. No, I will never leave Thee again, my beloved Lord. O my Saviour, who, to pay my debts, wouldest not only be wrapped by Mary in swaddling-clothes, but even be bound as a criminal by the executioners, and thus bound wouldest go along the streets of Jerusalem, led to death as an innocent lamb to the slaughter-house; O Thou, who wouldest be nailed to the cross, and didst not leave it until Thou hadst given up Thy life upon it,—I beseech Thee permit me not to be ever separated again from Thee, so that I should again find myself deprived of Thy favour and of Thy love. O Mary, who didst one day bind in swaddling-clothes this thy innocent Son, I pray thee, do thou bind me also, a miserable sinner; bind me to Jesus, so that I may never again separate my-

self from His feet, that I may always live and die bound to Him, so that one day I may have the happiness to enter into that blessed country where I shall never be able and shall never be afraid of detaching myself from His holy love.

Meditation IV.

On Jesus taking milk.

As soon as Jesus was swathed, He looked for and took milk from the breast of Mary. The spouse in the Canticles desired to see her little brother taking milk from his mother: "Who shall give thee to me for my brother, sucking the breast of my mother" (Cant. viii. 1). The spouse desired it, but did not see him; but we have had the happiness to see the Son of God made Man, and become our brother, taking milk from the breasts of Mary. Oh, what a spectacle must it not have been to Paradise to see the Divine Word become an infant sucking milk from a virgin who was His own creature! He, then, who feeds all men and all animals upon the earth, is become so weak and so poor, that He requires a little milk to sustain life! Sister Paula, the Camaldolese, in contemplating a little image of Jesus taking milk, felt herself immediately all inflamed with a tender love to God. Jesus took but little of this milk, and took it but seldom in the day. It was revealed to Sister Mary Anne, a Franciscan, that Mary only gave Him milk three times in the day. O milk most precious to us, to be changed into blood in the veins of Jesus Christ, and so to be made by Him a bath of salvation to cleanse our souls! Let us consider also that Jesus took this milk in order to nourish the Body which He wished to leave us as food in the Holy Communion. Therefore, my Blessed Redeemer, whilst Thou dost suck the breast of Mary, Thou art thinking of me; Thou art thinking of changing this milk into blood, to be shed afterwards at Thy death, as the price wherewith to ransom my soul, and as its food in the most Holy Sacrament, which is the salutary milk with which our Lord preserves our souls in the life of grace: 'Christ is your milk,' says St. Augustine. O beloved Infant, O my Jesus, let me also exclaim with the woman in the Gospel,

"Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck." Blessed art thou, O Mother of God, who hadst the happiness to give milk to the Incarnate Word! Oh, admit me, in company with this great Son, to take from Thee the milk of a tender and loving devotion to the infancy of Jesus and to thyself, my dearest Mother. And I thank Thee, O divine Infant, who didst deign to stand in need of milk for Thy support in order to show me the love that Thou bearest me. This is what our Lord once gave St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi to understand, that He had reduced Himself to the necessity of taking milk in order to make us comprehend the love that He has for redeemed souls.[15]

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my sweet and most amiable Infant, Thou art the bread of heaven, and dost sustain the angels: Thou dost provide all creatures with food; and yet how art Thou reduced to the necessity of begging a little milk from a Virgin in order to preserve Thy life! O Divine love, how couldst Thou reduce a God to such a state of poverty, that He was in want of a little food? But I understand Thee, O my Jesus; Thou didst take milk from Mary in this stable to offer it to God changed into blood on the cross as a sacrifice, and in satisfaction for our sins. Give, O Mary, give all the milk thou canst to this Son, because every drop of this milk shall serve to wash out the sins of my soul, and to nourish it afterwards in the Holy Communion. O my Redeemer, how can one not love Thee who believes what Thou hast done and suffered to save us? And I, how could I know this, and yet be so ungrateful to Thee? But Thy goodness is my hope; and this makes me sure that if I wish for Thy grace, it is mine. I repent, O sovereign Good, of having offended Thee, and I love Thee above all things. Or rather, I love nothing, I love and I will love Thee alone; Thou art, and shalt always be, my only good, my only love. My beloved Redeemer, give me, I pray Thee, a tender devotion to Thy holy Infancy, such as Thou hast given to so many souls, who, meditating on Thee as an Infant, forgetting all else, seem unable to think

of any thing but of loving Thee. It is true that they are innocent, and I am a sinner; but Thou didst become a child to make Thyself loved even by sinners. I have been such; but now I love Thee with my whole heart, and I desire nothing but Thy love. O Mary, give me a little of that tenderness with which thou didst give suck to the Infant Jesus.

Meditation V.

Jesus lying on the straw.

Jesus is born in the stable at Bethlehem. His poor Mother has neither wool nor down to make a bed for the tender Infant. What does she do, then? She gathers together a small handful of straw into the manger, and puts it there for Him to lie on: "And she laid Him in the manger." But, O my God, how hard and painful is this bed for an infant just born; the limbs of a baby are so delicate, and especially the limbs of Jesus, which were formed by the Holy Spirit with a special delicacy, in order that they might be the more sensible to suffering: "A body Thou hast fitted to me" (Heb. x. 5). Wherefore the hardness of such a bed must have caused Him excessive pain,—pain and shame; for what child, even of the lowest of the people, is ever laid on straw as soon as he is born? Straw is only a fit bed for beasts; and yet the Son of God had none other on earth than a bed of miserable straw! St. Francis of Assisi heard one day as he sat at table these words of the Gospel: "And laid Him in the manger;" and exclaimed: 'What? my Lord was laid on the straw, and shall I continue to sit?' And thus he got up from his seat, threw himself on the ground, and there finished his scanty meal, mingling it with tears of tenderness as he contemplated the sufferings that the Infant Jesus endured whilst He lay on the straw. But why did Mary, who had so earnestly desired the birth of this Son, why did she who loved Him so much, allow Him to lie and suffer on this hard bed, instead of keeping Him in her arms? This is a mystery, says St. Thomas of Villanova: 'nor would she have laid Him in such a place, unless

there had been some great mystery in it.' This great mystery has been explained by many in different ways, but the most pleasing explanation to me is that of St. Peter Damian: Jesus wished as soon as He was born to be placed on the straw, in order to teach us the mortification of our senses; 'He laid down the law of martyrdom.' The world had been lost by sensual pleasures; through them had Adam and multitudes of his descendants till then been lost. The Eternal Word came from heaven to teach us the love of suffering; and He began as a child to teach it to us by choosing for Himself the most acute sufferings that an infant can endure. It was, therefore, He Himself who inspired His Mother to cease from holding Him in her tender arms, and to replace Him on the hard bed, that He might feel the more the cold of the cave and the pricking of this rough straw.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O Lover of souls, O my loving Redeemer, is not, then, the sorrowful Passion that awaits Thee, and the bitter death that is prepared for Thee on the cross, sufficient, but Thou must, even from the commencement of Thy life, even from Thy infancy, begin to suffer? Yes, because even as an infant Thou wouldest begin to be my Redeemer, and to satisfy the Divine justice for my sins. Thou didst choose a bed of straw to deliver me from the fire of hell, into which I have so many times deserved to be cast. Thou didst cry and mourn on this bed of straw to obtain for me pardon from Thy Father. Oh, how these Thy tears afflict and yet console me! They afflict me from compassion at seeing Thee, an innocent babe, suffering so much for sins not Thy own; but they console me, because Thy sufferings assure me of my salvation, and of Thy immense love for me. But, my Jesus, I will not leave Thee alone to cry and to suffer. I myself will also weep; for I alone deserve to shed tears on account of the offences I have committed against Thee. I, who have deserved hell, will not refuse any suffering whatever, so that I may regain Thy favour, O my Saviour. Forgive me, I beseech Thee; receive me once more into Thy friendship, make me love Thee, and then

chastise me as Thou wilt. Deliver me from eternal punishment, and then treat me as it shall please Thee. I do not seek for pleasures in this life; he does not deserve pleasure who has had the temerity to offend Thee, O infinite Goodness. I am content to suffer all the crosses Thou shalt send me; but, my Jesus, I will love Thee still. O Mary, who didst sympathise by thy sufferings with the sufferings of Jesus, obtain for me the grace to suffer all my trials with patience. Woe to me, if after so many sins I do not suffer something in this life! And blessed shall I be, if I have the happiness to accompany thee in thy sufferings, O my sorrowful Mother, and Thee, O my Jesus, always afflicted and crucified for love of me.

Meditation VI.

Jesus sleeping.

Very short and painful were the slumbers of the Infant Jesus. A manger was His cradle, straw was His bed, and straw His pillow; so that Jesus was constantly interrupted in His sleep by the hardness of this rough and painful little bed, and by the severe cold of the cave. Notwithstanding all this, nature succumbing to its wants, the sweet Babe from time to time slept amidst His sufferings. But the sleep of Jesus differed very much from that of other children; the slumbers of other children are useful for the preservation of life, but not for the operations of the soul, because the soul being buried in sleep with the senses, cannot then work; but such was not the sleep of Jesus Christ: "I sleep, and My heart watcheth" (Cant. v. 2). His body was asleep, but His soul was watching; because in Jesus there was united the person of the Word, who could not sleep, nor be influenced by the slumber of the senses. The Holy Infant slept therefore; but while He slept He thought of all the sufferings He was to endure for our sakes during all His life and at His death. He thought of the labours He was to undergo in Egypt and in Nazareth during His miserable and despised life; He thought more particularly on the scourges, the thorns, the ignominies, the agonies,

and on that miserable death that He should at last suffer upon the cross; and whilst He was sleeping He offered all this to His Eternal Father to obtain for us pardon and salvation; so that whilst our Saviour was sleeping He was meriting for us and appeasing His Father, and obtaining graces for us. Let us now beseech Him, by the merit of His blessed slumbers, to deliver us from the deadly slumber of sinners who unhappily sleep in the death of sin, forgetful of God and of His love; and to give us instead the blessed sleep of the holy spouse, of which He said: "Stir not up, nor make the beloved to wake, till she please" (Cant. ii. 7). This is the sleep that God gives to His beloved souls, which is none other, as St. Basil says, 'but the most profound oblivion of all things;' and this is when the soul forgets all earthly things, to attend only to God and to the things that concern His glory.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My beloved and holy Infant, Thou sleepest, and O, how do Thy slumbers enamour me! With others sleep is the emblem of death; but in Thee it is the sign of eternal life, because whilst Thou art sleeping, Thou art meriting for me eternal salvation. Thou sleepest; but Thy Heart sleeps not, it is thinking of suffering and dying for me. Whilst Thou art slumbering, Thou art praying for me, and obtaining for me from God the eternal rest of Paradise. But before Thou dost carry me (as I hope) to repose with Thee in heaven, I desire that Thou shouldest repose for ever in my soul. There was a time, O my God, when I drove Thee away from me; but I trust that, by means of knocking so often at the door of my heart,—now by making it afraid, now by enlightening it, now by the voice of love,—Thou hast already obtained an entrance there. This, I say, is my hope, because I feel a great confidence that I have been forgiven by Thee; I feel a great hatred and penitence for the offences I have committed against Thee,—penitence that causes me great sorrow; but a sorrow of peace, a sorrow that comforts me and makes me hope most assuredly for pardon from Thy goodness. I thank Thee, my Jesus, and I pray Thee never again to separate Thy-

self from my soul. I know indeed that Thou wilt not leave me, if I do not drive Thee away; but this is the favour I ask of Thee (and I pray Thee to give me Thy assistance that I may always seek it of Thee), that Thou wouldest not permit me ever to drive Thee from me. Make me forget every thing, in order to think of Thee who hast always thought of me and of my welfare. Make me always love Thee in this life, so that I may breathe forth my soul in Thy arms, united to Thee, and may repose eternally in Thee without fear of losing Thee again. O Mary, assist me in life and in death, so that Jesus may always repose in me, and that I may always repose in Jesus

Meditation VII.

Jesus weeping.

The tears of the Infant Jesus were very different from those of other new-born babes: these weep through pain; Jesus did not weep from pain, but through compassion for us and through love: 'They weep because of suffering, Christ because of compassion,' says St. Bernard.[16] Tears are a great sign of love. Therefore did the Jews say when they saw the Saviour weeping for the death of Lazarus: "Behold how He loved him" (St. John xi. 36). Thus also might the angels have said on beholding the tears of the Infant Jesus: 'Behold how He loves them.' Behold how our God loves men; since for love of them we see Him made man, become an Infant, and shedding tears. Jesus wept, and offered to His Father His tears to obtain for us the pardon of our sins. 'These tears,' said St. Ambrose, 'washed away my sins;' by His cries and tears He implored mercy for us who were condemned to eternal death, and thus He appeased the indignation of His Father. O, how eloquently did the tears of this Divine little one plead in our behalf! O, how precious were they to God! It was then that the Father caused the angels to proclaim that He made peace with men, and received them into His favour: "And on earth peace to men of good-will." Jesus wept through love, but He also wept through

sorrow at the thought that so many sinners, even after all His tears and the blood He should shed for their salvation, would yet continue to despise His grace. But who would be so hard-hearted, on seeing an Infant God weeping for our sins, as not to weep also, and to detest those sins that have made this loving Saviour shed so many tears? O, let us not increase the sorrows of this innocent Babe; but let us console Him by uniting our tears to His! Let us offer to God the tears of His Son, and let us beseech Him for their sake to forgive us!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My beloved Infant, whilst Thou wert weeping in the stable of Bethlehem, Thou wert thinking of me; beholding even then my sins, which were the cause of Thy tears. And have I then, O my Jesus, instead of consoling Thee by my love and gratitude at the thought of what Thou hast suffered to save me, have I increased Thy sorrow and the cause of Thy tears? If I had sinned less, Thou wouldst have wept less. Weep, O, weep, for Thou hast cause to weep in seeing such great ingratitude of men to Thy great love. But since Thou weepest, weep also for me; Thy tears are my hope. I also will weep for the offences I have committed against Thee, O my Redeemer; I hate them, I detest them, I repent of them with my whole heart. I weep for all those days and those wretched nights of mine in which I lived Thy enemy and deprived of Thy beautiful face; but what would my tears avail, O my Jesus, without Thine?

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the tears of the Infant Jesus; for their sake forgive me. And Thou, my dearest Saviour, offer to Him all the tears that Thou didst shed for me during Thy life, and with them appease His anger against me. I beseech Thee also, O my Love, to soften my heart by these tears, and to inflame it with Thy holy love. Oh, that I could from this day forth console Thee by my love for all the pain I have caused Thee by offending Thee. Grant, therefore, O Lord, that the days that remain to me in this life may not any more be spent in offending Thee, but only in weeping for the offences I have

committed against Thee, and in loving Thee with all the affections of my soul. O Mary, I beseech thee, by that tender compassion which thou didst so often feel at the sight of the Infant Jesus in tears, obtain for me a constant sorrow for the offences which I have so ungratefully been guilty of against Him.

Meditation VIII.

On the Name of Jesus.

The Name of Jesus is a Divine Name, announced to Mary on the part of God by St. Gabriel: "and thou shalt call His Name Jesus" (St. Luke i. 31). For that reason it was called "a Name above all names" (Phil. ii. 9). And it was also called a Name in which alone salvation is found: "whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). This great Name is likened by the Holy Spirit unto oil: "Thy Name is as oil poured out" (Cant. i. 2). For this reason, says St. Bernard, that as oil is light, food, and medicine; so the Name of Jesus is light to the mind, food to the heart, and medicine to the soul. It is light to the mind. By this Name the world was converted from the darkness of idolatry to the light of faith. We who have been born in these regions, where before the coming of Christ all our ancestors were Gentiles, should all have been in the same condition had not the Messias come to enlighten us. How thankful ought we not then to be to Jesus Christ for the gift of faith! And what would have become of us if we had been born in Asia, in Africa, in America, or in the midst of heretics and schismatics? He who believes not is lost: "He that believeth not shall be condemned" (St. Mark xvi. 16). And thus probably we also should have been lost. The Name of Jesus is also food that nourishes our hearts; yes, because this Name reminds us of what Jesus has done to save us. Hence this Name consoles us in tribulation, gives us strength to walk along the way of salvation, supplies us with courage in difficulties, and inflames us to love our Redeemer, when we remember what He has suffered for our salvation. Lastly, this Name is

medicine to the soul, because it renders it strong against the temptations of our enemies. The devils tremble and fly at the invocation of this holy Name, according to the words of the Apostle: "That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Phil. ii. 10). He who in temptation calls upon Jesus shall not fall; and he who shall constantly invoke Him shall not fall, and shall be saved: "Praising, I will call upon the Lord; and I shall be saved from my enemies" (Psalm xvii. 1). And who was ever lost, who when he was tempted invoked Jesus? He alone is lost who does not invoke His aid, or who, whilst the temptation continues, ceases to invoke Him.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Oh, that I had always called upon Thee, my Jesus; for then I should never have been conquered by the devil! I have miserably lost Thy grace, because in temptation I have neglected to call Thee to my assistance. But now I hope for all things through Thy holy Name: "I can do all things in Him who comforts me." Write therefore, O my Saviour, write upon my poor heart Thy most powerful Name of Jesus, so that, by having it always in my heart by loving Thee, I may have it always on my lips by invoking Thee, in all the temptations that hell prepares for me, in order to induce me to become again its slave, and to separate myself from Thee. In Thy Name I shall find every good. If I am afflicted, it will console me when I think how much more afflicted Thou hast been than I am, and all for the love of me; if I am disheartened on account of my sins, it will give me courage when I remember that Thou camest into the world to save sinners; if I am tempted, Thy holy Name will give me strength, when I consider that Thou canst help me more than hell can cast me down; finally, if I feel cold in Thy love, it will give me fervour, by reminding me of the love that Thou bearest me. I love Thee, my Jesus! Thou art, and I trust Thou wilt always be, my only Love. To Thee do I give all my heart, O my Jesus! Thee alone will I love! Thee will I invoke

as often as I possibly can. I will die with Thy Name upon my lips; a Name of hope, a Name of salvation, a Name of love. O Mary, if thou lovest me, this is the grace I beg of thee to obtain for me,—the grace constantly to invoke thy name and that of thy Son; obtain for me that these most sweet names may be the breath of my soul, and that I may always repeat them during my life, in order to repeat them at my death with my last breath. Jesus and Mary, help me; Jesus and Mary, I love you; Jesus and Mary, I recommend my soul to you.

Meditation IX.

On the solitude of Jesus in the stable.

Jesus chose at His birth the stable of Bethlehem for His hermitage and oratory; and for this purpose He so disposed events as to be born out of the city in a solitary cave, in order to recommend to us the love of solitude and of silence. Jesus remains in silence in the manger; Mary and Joseph adore and contemplate Him in silence. It was revealed to Sister Margaret of the Blessed Sacrament, a discalced Carmelite, who was called the Spouse of the Infant Jesus, that all that passed in the cave of Bethlehem, even the visit of the shepherds, and the adoration of the holy Magi, took place in silence, and without a word. Silence in other infants is impotence; but in Jesus Christ it was virtue. The Infant Jesus does not speak; but oh, how much His silence says! Oh, blessed is he that converses with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in this holy solitude of the manger. The shepherds, though admitted there but for a very short time, came out from the stable all inflamed with love to God; for they did nothing but praise and bless Him: "They returned, glorifying and praising God" (St. Luke ii. 20). Oh, happy the soul that shuts herself up in the solitude of Bethlehem to contemplate the Divine mercy, and the love that God has borne, and still bears, to men! "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart" (Os. ii. 14). There the Divine Infant will speak, not to the ear, but to the heart, inviting the soul to love a God who hath loved her so much. When we see there the

poverty of this wandering little Hermit, who remains in that cold cave, without fire, with a manger for a crib, and a little straw for a bed; when we hear the cries, and behold the tears of this innocent Child, and consider that He is our God,—how is it possible to think of any thing but of loving Him! Oh, what a sweet hermitage for a soul that has faith is the stable of Bethlehem! Let us also imitate Mary and Joseph, who, burning with love, remain contemplating the great Son of God clothed in flesh, and made subject to earthly miseries,—Wisdom become an infant that cannot speak,—the Great One become little,—the Supreme One become so abased,—the Rich One become so poor,—the Omnipotent so weak. In short, let us meditate on the Divine Majesty shrouded beneath the form of a little Infant, despised and forsaken by the world, and who does and suffers every thing in order to make Himself loved by men; and let us beseech Him to admit us into this sacred retreat;—there stop, there remain, and never leave it again. 'O solitude,' says St. Jerome, 'in which God speaks and converses familiarly with His servants;' O beautiful solitude, in which God speaks and converses with His chosen souls, not as a sovereign, but as a friend, as a brother, as a spouse; O, what a paradise it is to converse alone with the Infant Jesus in the little grot of Bethlehem!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My dearest Saviour, Thou art the King of Heaven, the King of kings, the Son of God; and how is it, then, that I see Thee in this cave, forsaken by all? I see no one assisting Thee but Joseph and Thy holy Mother. I desire to unite myself also with them in keeping Thee company. Do not reject me. I do not deserve it; but I feel that Thou dost invite me by Thy sweet voice, speaking to my heart. Yes, I come, O my beloved Infant! I will leave all things to pass my whole life alone with Thee, my dear little Hermit, the only Love of my soul. Fool that I was, I have hitherto forsaken Thee and left Thee alone, O my Jesus, whilst I was seeking miserable and empoisoned pleasures from creatures; but now, enlightened by Thy

grace, I desire nothing but to live in solitude with Thee, who didst will to live Thyself in solitude on this earth: "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest?" (Ps. liv. 7.) Ah, who will enable me to fly from this world, where I have so often found my ruin,—to fly, and to come and remain always with Thee who art the joy of Paradise and the true I over of my soul? Oh, bind me, I pray Thee, to Thy feet, so that I may no longer be separated from Thee, but may find my happiness in continually keeping company with Thee! Ah, by the merits of Thy solitude in the cave of Bethlehem, give me a constant interior recollection, so that my soul may become a solitary little cell, where I may attend to nothing but to conversing with Thee, where I may take counsel with Thee in all my thoughts and all my actions; where I may dedicate to Thee all my affections, where I may always love Thee, and sigh to leave the prison of this body to come and love Thee face to face in heaven. I love thee, O infinite Goodness, and I hope always to love Thee, in time and in eternity. O Mary, thou who canst do all things, pray to Him to enchain me with His love, and not to permit me ever again to lose His grace.

Meditation X.

On the occupations of the Infant Jesus in the stable of Bethlehem.

There are two principal occupations of a solitary,—to pray, and to do penance. Behold the Infant Jesus in the little grotto of Bethlehem giving us the example. He, in the crib which He chose for His oratory upon earth, never ceases to pray, and to pray continually, to the Eternal Father. There He constantly makes acts of adoration, of love, and of prayer. Before this time the Divine Majesty had been, it is true, adored by men and by angels; but God had not received from all these creatures that honour which the Infant Jesus gave Him by adoring Him in the stable where He was born. Let us, therefore, constantly unite our adorations to those of Jesus Christ when He was upon this earth. Oh, how beautiful and perfect were the

acts of love which the Incarnate Word made to His Father in His prayer! God had given to man the commandment to love Him with all his heart and all his strength; but this precept had never been perfectly fulfilled by any man. The first to accomplish it amongst women was Mary, and amongst men the first was Jesus Christ, who fulfilled it in a degree infinitely superior to Mary. The love of the seraphim may be said to be cold in comparison with the love of this Holy Infant. Let us learn from Him to love the Lord our God as He ought to be loved; and let us beseech Him to communicate to us a spark of that pure love with which He loved the Divine Father in the stable of Bethlehem. Oh, how beautiful, perfect, and dear to God were the prayers of the Infant Jesus! At every moment He prayed to His Father, and His prayers were all for us and for each one of us in particular. All the graces that each one of us has received from the Lord, and our being called to the true faith, our having had time given us for repentance, the lights, the sorrow for sins, the pardon of them, the holy desires, the victory over temptations, and all the other good acts that we have made, or shall make, of confidence, of humility, of love, of thanksgiving, of offering, of resignation,—all these Jesus has obtained for us, and all has been the effect of the prayers of Jesus. Oh, how much do we owe Him! and how much ought we not to thank Him and to love Him!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My dear Redeemer, how much do I owe Thee! If Thou hadst not prayed for me, in what a state of ruin should I find myself! I thank Thee, O my Jesus; Thy prayers have obtained for me the pardon of my sins, and I hope that they will also obtain for me perseverance unto death. Thou hast prayed for me, and I bless Thee with my whole heart for it; but I beseech Thee not to leave off praying. I know that Thou dost continue even in heaven to be our advocate: "We have an advocate, Jesus Christ" (1 St. John ii. 1); and I know that Thou dost continue to pray for us: "Who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 34): continue therefore to pray; but pray, O

my Jesus, more particularly for me. who am more in want of Thy prayers. I hope God has already pardoned me through Thy merits; but as I have already so often fallen, I may therefore fall again. Hell does not cease, and will not cease to tempt me, in order to make me again lose Thy friendship. Ah, my Jesus, Thou art my hope; it is Thou that must give me fortitude to resist; from Thee I seek it, and of Thee I hope for it! But I will not content myself only with the grace not to fall again; I desire also the grace to love Thee exceedingly. My death approaches. If I were to die now, I should indeed hope to be saved; but I should love Thee but little in Paradise, because I have hitherto loved Thee so little. I will love Thee much in the days that remain to me, that I may love Thee still more in eternity. O Mary, my Mother, do thou also pray, and beseech Jesus for me; thy prayers are all-powerful with thy Son, who loves thee so much. Thou dost so much desire that He should be loved, beseech Him to give me a great love for His goodness, and let this love be constant and eternal.

Meditation XI.

On the poverty of the Infant Jesus.

O God, who would not feel compassion, if he saw a little prince, the son of a monarch, born in such poverty as to be left to lie in a damp cold cavern, not having either bed, or servants, or fire, or clothes sufficient to warm him? Ah, my Jesus, Thou art the Son of the Lord of heaven and earth, and yet Thou liest in this cold grotto without other cradle than a manger, with nothing but straw for Thy bed, and miserable rags to cover Thee. The angels stand round Thee and sing Thy praises, but they do not relieve Thy poverty. My dear Redeemer, the poorer Thou art, the more amiable Thou dost render Thyself in our eyes, because Thou hast embraced such great poverty for this end, to make us love Thee more. If Thou hadst been born in a palace, if Thou hadst had a cradle of gold, if Thou hadst been assisted by the first princes of the earth, —Thou wouldst have acquired more respect from men,

but less love ; but this stable where Thou dost sleep, these miserable rags that cover Thee, this straw that serves as Thy bed, this manger that is Thy only cradle,—oh, how do they attract our souls to love Thee, because Thou hast made Thyself thus poor in order to become more dear to us : ' The viler He was for me,' says St. Bernard, ' the dearer He is to me.' Thou hast made Thyself poor to enrich us with Thy riches, that is, with grace and glory : " He became poor, that through His poverty you might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). The poverty of Jesus Christ was for us great riches, inasmuch as it moves us to acquire the treasures of heaven and to despise those of earth. Ah, my Jesus ! this Thy poverty has induced so many saints to leave all, riches, honours, and kingdoms, in order to become poor with Thee ! Oh, detach me also, my Saviour, from all affection to earthly goods, so that I may be made worthy to acquire Thy holy love, and thus to possess Thee, who art the infinite Good !

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Oh, that I also could say to Thee, O holy Infant, with thy dear St. Francis, ' my God and my All !' and with David : " What have I in heaven ? and besides Thee, what do I desire upon earth ? . . . God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever" (Ps. lxxii. 25, 26) ; so that from this day forth I might desire no other riches but those of Thy love, and that my heart might be no more under the dominion of the vanities of the world, but that Thou alone, my Love, mightest be its only Lord. But I even now wish to begin to say it : " God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever." Miserable that I was, I have hitherto only sought after worldly goods, and have found nothing but thorns and gall. I feel more satisfaction at finding myself at Thy feet, to thank Thee and love Thee, than I have ever experienced from all my sins. One fear alone afflicts me—the fear that Thou hast not yet forgiven me ; but Thy promises of forgiveness to the penitent, the thought that Thou didst make Thyself poor for the love of me, that Thou art still calling me to love Thee ; the tears, the blood Thou hast shed for me, the sorrows,

the ignominy, the bitter death Thou hast endured for me,—all console me, and make me hope certainly for pardon. And supposing Thou hast not forgiven me, what shall I then do? Dost Thou desire that I should repent? I repent with my whole heart of having offended Thee, O my Jesus. Dost Thou desire that I should love Thee? I love Thee more than myself. Dost Thou desire that I should give up every thing? Behold, I give up all and give myself to Thee; and I know that Thou dost accept me, otherwise I should neither have sorrow, nor love, nor the desire to give myself to Thee. I give myself then to Thee, and Thou hast already accepted me. I love Thee, and Thou dost also love me. Do not permit that this love between Thee and me should evermore be interrupted. Oh, my Mother Mary, do thou obtain for me the grace that I may always love Jesus, and that I may always be loved by Him!

On the Vigil of the Epiphany, Meditation V., amongst the Meditations for Advent, page 21, may be repeated here.

MEDITATIONS

FOR THE OCTAVE OF THE EPIPHANY.

Meditation I.

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.

Jesus is born poor in a stable; the angels of heaven indeed acknowledge Him, but men abandon and forsake Him on earth. Only a few shepherds come and pay Him homage. But our Redeemer was desirous of communicating to us the grace of His redemption, and begins therefore to manifest Himself to the Gentiles, who knew Him least. Therefore He sends a star to enlighten the holy Magi, in order that they may come and acknowledge and adore their Saviour. This was the first and sovereign grace bestowed upon us,—our vocation to the faith; which was succeeded by our vocation to grace, of which men were deprived. Behold the wise men, who immediately, without delay, set off upon their journey. The star accompanies them as far as the cavern where the holy Infant lies: on their arrival they enter; and what do they find? "They found the child with Mary" (St. Matt. ii. 11). They find a poor maiden and a poor Infant wrapped in poor swaddling-clothes, without any one to attend on Him or assist Him. But, lo! on entering into the little shed these holy pilgrims feel a joy which they had never felt before; they feel their hearts chained to the dear little Infant which they behold. The straw, the poverty, the cries of their little Saviour,—oh, what darts of love! oh, what blessed flames are they to their enlightened hearts! The Infant looks upon them with a joyful countenance, and this is the mark of affection with which He accepts them amongst the first-

fruits of His redemption. The holy kings then look at Mary, who does not speak—she remains silent; but with her blessed countenance that breathes the sweetness of Paradise she welcomes them. and thanks them for having been the first to come and acknowledge her Son (as indeed He is) for their Sovereign Lord. See also how, out of reverence, they adore Him in silence, and acknowledge Him for their God, kissing His feet, and offering Him their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Let us also with the holy Magi adore our little King Jesus, and let us offer Him all our hearts.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O amiable Infant, though I see Thee in this cavern lying on straw poor and despised, yet faith teaches me that Thou art my God, who camest down from heaven for my salvation. I acknowledge Thee then for my sovereign Lord and Saviour; but I have nothing, alas! to offer Thee. I have no gold of love, because I have loved creatures; I have loved my own caprices, but I have not loved Thee, O amiable infinite One. I have not the incense of prayer, because I have lived in a miserable state of forgetfulness of Thee. I have no myrrh of mortification, for I have often displeased Thy infinite goodness that I might not be deprived of my miserable pleasures. What then shall I offer Thee? I offer Thee my heart, filthy and poor as it is; do Thou accept it, and change it. Thou camest into the world for this purpose, to wash the hearts of men from their sins by Thy blood, and thus change them from sinners into saints. Give me, therefore, I pray Thee, this gold, this incense, and this myrrh. Give me the gold of Thy holy love; give me the spirit of holy prayer; give me the desire and strength to mortify myself in every thing that displeases Thee. I am resolved to obey Thee and to love Thee; but Thou knowest my weakness, oh, give me the grace to be faithful to Thee! Most holy Virgin, thou who didst welcome with such affection and didst console the holy Magi, do thou welcome and console me also, who come to visit thy Son and to offer myself to Him. O my Mother, I have great confidence in thy intercession! Do

thou recommend me to Jesus. To thee do I intrust my soul and my will; bind it for ever to the love of Jesus!

Meditation II.

On the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

The time having now come when, according to the law, Mary had to go to the Temple for her purification, and to present Jesus to the Divine Father, behold she sets out in company with Joseph. Joseph carries the two turtle-doves that they are to offer to God, and Mary carries her dear Infant: she takes the Lamb of God to offer Him to the Almighty, in token of the great sacrifice that this Son should one day accomplish on the cross. Consider the holy Virgin entering the Temple; she makes an oblation of her Son on the part of the whole human race, and says: Behold, O Eternal Father, Thy beloved only-begotten One, who is Thy Son and mine also; I offer Him to Thee as a victim to Thy Divine justice, in order to appease Thy wrath against sinners. Accept Him, O God of mercy, have pity on our miseries; for the love of this immaculate Lamb do Thou receive men into Thy grace. The offering of Mary is joined to that of Jesus. Behold Me (says also the holy Infant), behold Me, O My Father; to Thee do I consecrate My whole life; Thou hast sent Me into the world to save it by My blood; behold My blood and My whole self, I offer Myself entirely to Thee for the salvation of the world. "He delivered Himself . . . an oblation and a sacrifice to God" (Eph. v. 2). No sacrifice was ever so acceptable to God as this which His dear Son then made to Him; who had become, even from His infancy, a victim and priest. If all men and angels had offered their lives, their oblation could not have been so dear to God as was this of Jesus Christ, because in this offering alone the Eternal Father received infinite honour and infinite satisfaction. If Jesus offers His life to His Father for the love of us, it is just that we should offer Him our life and our entire being. This is what He desires, as He signified to the blessed Angela da Foligno, saying to her: 'I have offered Myself for thee, in order that thou shouldest offer thyself to Me.'

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Eternal Father, I, a miserable sinner, who have deserved a thousand hells, present myself this day before Thee, O God of infinite majesty, and I offer Thee my poor heart. But, O God, what a heart is it that I offer Thee? a heart that has never known how to love Thee, but has on the contrary so often offended Thee and so often betrayed Thee; but now I offer it to Thee full of penitence, and resolved to love Thee at all costs and to obey Thee in all things. Pardon me, and draw me entirely to Thy love. I do not deserve to be heard; but Thy infant Son, who offers Himself to Thee in the Temple as a sacrifice for my salvation, merits for me this grace. I offer Thee this Thy Son and His sacrifice, and in this I place all my hopes. I thank Thee, O my Father, for having sent Him upon the earth to sacrifice Himself for me. And I bless Thee, O Incarnate Word, Lamb of God, who didst offer Thyself to die for my soul. I love Thee, my dear Redeemer, and Thee alone will I love; for I find none but Thee that has offered and sacrificed his life to save me. It makes me shed tears to think how grateful I have been to others and how ungrateful to Thee alone; but Thou willest not my death, but that I should be converted and live. Yes, my Jesus, I turn to Thee, and repent with my whole heart of having offended Thee, and of having offended my God, who has thus sacrificed Himself for me. Do Thou give me life, and that life shall consist in loving Thee, the sovereign Good; make me love Thee, I ask Thee nothing more. Mary, my Mother, thou didst offer at that time thy Son in the Temple even for me; do thou offer Him again for me; and beseech the Eternal Father, for the love of Jesus, to accept me for His own. And thou, my Queen, do thou also accept me for thy perpetual servant. If I am thy servant, I shall also be the servant of thy Son.

Meditation III.

ON THE FLIGHT OF JESUS INTO EGYPT.

The angel appeared to St. Joseph in a dream, and informed him that Herod was seeking the Infant Jesus to destroy His life; wherefore he said, "Arise, and take the

Child and His mother, and fly into Egypt" (St. Matt. ii. 13). Behold, then, how Jesus is no sooner born than He is persecuted unto death. Herod is a figure of those miserable sinners who, as soon as they see Jesus Christ born again in their souls by the pardon of sin, persecute Him to death by returning to their sins: "they seek the Child to destroy Him." Joseph immediately obeys the command of the angel without delay, and gives notice of it to his holy spouse. He then takes the few tools that he can carry, in order to make use of them in his trade, and to be able in Egypt to support his poor family. Mary at the same time puts together a little bundle of clothes for the use of the holy Child; and then she goes into her cell, kneels down first before her Infant Son, kisses His feet, and then with tears of tenderness says to Him: O my Son and my God, hardly art Thou born and come into the world to save men, when these men seek Thee to put Thee to death. She then takes Him; and the two holy spouses, shedding tears as they go, shut the door, and the same night set out on their journey. Let us consider the occupations of these holy pilgrims during their journey. All their conversation is upon their dear Jesus alone, on His patience and His love; and thus they console themselves in the midst of the trials and inconveniences of so long a journey. Oh, how sweet it is to suffer at the sight of Jesus suffering! O my soul, says St. Bonaventure, do thou also keep company with these three poor holy exiles; and have compassion with them in the long, wearisome, and painful journey which they are making. And beseech Mary that she will give thee her Divine Son to carry in thy heart. Consider how much they must have suffered, especially in those nights which they had to pass in the desert of Egypt. The bare earth serves them for a bed in the cold open air. The Infant weeps, Mary and Joseph shed tears of compassion. O holy faith, who would not weep at seeing the Son of God become an infant, poor and forsaken, flying across a desert in order to escape death?

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

My dear Jesus, Thou art the King of Heaven, but now

I behold Thee as an infant wandering over the earth ; tell me whom art Thou in search of? I pity Thee when I see Thee so poor and humbled ; but I pity Thee more when I see Thee treated with such ingratitude by those same men whom Thou camest to save. Thou dost weep ; but I also weep, because I have been one of those who in times past have despised and persecuted Thee. But now I value Thy grace more than all the kingdoms of the world ; forgive me, O my Jesus, all the evil I have committed against Thee, and permit me to carry Thee always in my heart during the journey of my life to eternity, even as Mary carried Thee in her arms during the flight into Egypt. My beloved Redeemer, I have many times driven Thee out of my soul ; but now I hope Thou hast again taken possession of it. I beseech Thee, do Thou bind it to Thyself with the sweet chains of Thy love. I will never again drive Thee from me. But I fear lest I should again abandon Thee, as I have done in past times. O my Lord, let me die rather than treat Thee with fresh and still more horrible ingratitude. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness ; and I will always repeat to Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee; and so I hope to die saying, "God of my heart, and the God that art my portion for ever" O my Jesus, Thou art so good, so worthy of being loved, oh, do Thou make Thyself loved ; make Thyself loved by all the sinners who persecute Thee ; give them light, make them know the love Thou hast borne them and the love that Thou deservest, since Thou goest wandering about the earth as a poor Infant, weeping and trembling with cold, and seeking souls to love Thee ! O Mary, most holy Virgin, O dearest Mother and companion of the sufferings of Jesus, do thou help me always to carry and preserve in my heart thy Son, in life and in death !

Meditation IV.

On the dwelling of Jesus in Egypt.

Jesus chose to dwell in Egypt during His infancy, that He might lead a more hard and abject life. According to St. Anselm, and other writers, the holy family lived in

Heliopolis. Let us with St. Bonaventure contemplate the life that Jesus led during the seven years that He remained in Egypt, as it was revealed to St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi. The house they live in is very poor, because St. Joseph has but little wherewith to pay a rent; their bed is poor, their food poor; their life, in short, is one of strict poverty, for they barely gain their livelihood day by day by the work of their hands, and they live in a country where they are unknown and despised, having there neither relations nor friends. This holy family does indeed live in great poverty; but oh, how well-ordered are the occupations of these three sojourners! The holy Infant speaks not with His tongue; but in His heart He speaks indeed and continually to His heavenly Father, applying all His sufferings, and every moment of His life, for our salvation. Neither does Mary speak; but at the sight of that dear Infant she meditates on the Divine love, and the favour that God had conferred upon her by choosing her for His Mother. Joseph also works in silence; and at the sight of the Divine Child his heart is inflamed, while he thanks Him for having chosen him for the companion and guardian of His life. In this house Mary weans Jesus: at first she fed Him from her breast, now she feeds Him with her hands; she holds Him on her lap, takes from the porringer a little bread soaked in water, and then puts it into the sacred mouth of her Son. In this house Mary made her Infant His first little garment; and when the time was come, she took off His swaddling-clothes, and began to put on this vestment. In this house the Child Jesus began to walk and speak. Let us adore the first steps that the Incarnate Word began to take in this house, and the first words of eternal life that He began to utter. Here He began also to do the business of a little servant-boy, occupying Himself in all the little services that a child can render. Ah, weaning! ah, little garment! ah, first steps! ah, lisping words! ah, little services of the little Jesus, how do you not wound and inflame the hearts of those who love Jesus, and meditate on you! Behold a God trembling and falling, a God lisping, a God become so weak that He can occupy Himself in nothing but in little household affairs, and unable even to

lift a bit of wood, if too heavy for the strength of a child! O holy faith, enlighten us, and make us love this good Lord, who for the love of us has submitted Himself to so many miseries! It is said, that on the entrance of Jesus into Egypt all the idols of the country fell down; oh, let us pray to God that He will make us love Jesus from our hearts, since in that soul where the love of Jesus enters, all the idols of earthly affections are overthrown.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O Holy Infant, who livest in this country of barbarians poor, unknown, and despised, I acknowledge Thee for my God and Saviour, and I thank Thee for all the humiliations and sufferings Thou didst endure in Egypt for the love of me. By Thy manner of life there Thou dost teach me to live as a pilgrim on this earth, giving me to understand that this is not my country; but that Paradise, which Thou hast purchased for me by Thy death, is my home. Ah, my Jesus, I have been ungrateful to Thee, because I have thought but little of what Thou hast done and suffered for me. When I think that Thou, the Son of God, didst lead a life of such tribulation upon this earth, so poor and neglected, how is it possible that I should go about seeking the amusements and good things of the earth? Take me, I pray Thee, my dear Redeemer, for Thy companion; admit me to live always united to Thee upon this earth, in order that, united to Thee in heaven, I may love Thee there, and be Thy companion throughout eternity. Give me light, increase my faith. What goods, what pleasures, what dignities, what honours! All is vanity and folly. The only real riches, the only real good, is to possess Thee, who art the infinite Good. Blessed he who loves Thee! I love Thee, O my Jesus, and I seek none other but Thee. I desire Thee, and Thou desirest me. If I had a thousand kingdoms, I would renounce them all to please Thee, 'my God and my All.' If in times past I have sought after the vanities and pleasures of this world, I now detest them, and am sorry that I have done so. My beloved Saviour, from this day forward Thou shalt be my only delight, my only love, my only treasure. Most holy Mary, pray to

Jesus for me; beseech Him to make me rich in His love alone, and I desire nothing else.

Meditation V.

ON THE RETURN OF JESUS FROM EGYPT.

After the death of Herod, and an exile of seven years, according to the common opinion of the doctors, during which time Jesus lived in Egypt, the angel again appeared to St. Joseph, and commanded him to take the Holy Child and His Mother and return to Palestine. St. Joseph, consoled by this command, communicates it to Mary. Before their departure, these holy spouses courteously informed the friends whom they had made in the country. Joseph then collects the few instruments of his trade, Mary her little bundle of clothes, and taking by the hand the Divine Child, they set out on their journey homewards, leading Him between them. St. Bonaventure considers that this journey was more fatiguing to Jesus than was the flight into Egypt, because He was now become too large for Mary and Joseph to carry Him much in their arms; but at the same time the Holy Child, at His age, was not able to make a long journey; so that Jesus was obliged through fatigue frequently to stop and rest Himself on the way. But Joseph and Mary, whether they walk or sit, always keep their eyes and thoughts fixed upon the beloved little Child, who was the object of all their love. Oh, with what recollection does that happy soul travel through this life who keeps before her eyes the love and the examples of Jesus Christ! The holy pilgrims interrupt now and then the silence of this journey by some holy conversation; but with whom and of whom do they converse? They speak only with Jesus and of Jesus. He who has Jesus in his heart speaks only with Jesus or only speaks of Him. Consider, again, the pain that our little Saviour must have endured during the nights of this journey, in which He had no longer the bosom of Mary for His bed, as in His flight, but the bare ground; and for His food He had no more milk, but a little hard bread, too hard for His tender age.

He was probably also afflicted by thirst in this desert, in which the Jews had been in such want of water that a miracle was necessary to supply them with it. Let us contemplate, and lovingly adore all these sufferings of the Child Jesus.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Beloved and adored Child, Thou dost return to Thy country; but where, O God, where dost Thou return? Thou comest to that place where Thy countrymen prepare for Thee insults during life, and then scourges, thorns, ignominy, and a cross at Thy death. But all was already present to Thy Divine eyes, O my Jesus, and yet Thou comest of Thy own will to meet that Passion which men prepare for Thee. But, my Redeemer, if Thou hadst not come to die for me, I could not go to love Thee in Paradise, but must have always remained far away from Thee. Thy death hath been my salvation. But how is it, Lord, that by despising Thy grace I have again condemned myself to hell, even after Thy death, by which Thou didst deliver me from it? I acknowledge that hell is but a slight punishment for me. But Thou hast waited to pardon me. I thank Thee for it, O my Redeemer, and I repent, and detest all the offences I have committed against Thee. O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver me from hell. Ah, if I were miserable enough to damn myself, how would my torments in hell be increased by the remorse caused by my having meditated during my life on the love that Thou hast borne me! It would not be so much the fire of hell as Thy love, O my Jesus, that would be my hell. But Thou didst come into the world to kindle the fire of Thy holy love; I desire to burn with this fire, and not with that which would keep me for ever separated from Thee. I repeat, therefore, O my Jesus, deliver me from hell, because in hell I cannot love Thee. O Mary, my Mother, I hear it every where said and preached that those who love thee and trust in thee, provided they desire to amend their lives, will not go to hell. I love thee, my Lady, and I trust in thee; I will amend my life: O Mary, do thou remember to deliver me from hell.

Meditation VI.

ON THE DWELLING OF JESUS IN NAZARETH.

St. Joseph, on his return to Palestine, heard that Archelaus reigned in Judea instead of his father Herod, wherefore he was afraid to go and live there; and being warned in a dream, he went to live in Nazareth, a city of Galilee, and there in a poor little cottage he fixed his dwelling. O blessed house of Nazareth, I salute and venerate you! There will come a time when you will be visited by the great ones of the earth: when the pilgrims find themselves inside your poor walls, they will never be satisfied with shedding tears of tenderness at the thought that within them the King of Paradise passed nearly all His life. In this house, then, the Incarnate Word lived during the remainder of His infancy and youth. And how did He live? Poor and despised by men, performing the offices of a common working-boy, and obeying Joseph and Mary: "and He was subject to them" (St. Luke ii. 51). O God, how touching it is to think that in this poor house the Son of God lives as a servant! Now He goes to fetch water; then He opens or shuts the shop; now He sweeps the room; now He collects the shavings for the fire; now He labours in assisting Joseph at his trade. O wonder! To see a God sweeping! A God serving as a boy! O thought that ought to make us all burn with holy love to our Redeemer, who has reduced Himself to such humiliations in order to gain our love! Let us adore all these servile actions of Jesus, which were all divine. Let us adore, above all, the hidden and neglected life that Jesus Christ led in the house of Nazareth! O proud men, how can you desire to make yourselves seen and honoured, when you behold your God, who spends thirty years of His life in poverty, hidden and unknown, to teach us the love of retirement and of a humble and hidden life!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my adorable Infant, I see Thee a humble servant-boy, working even with the sweat of Thy brow in this

poor shop. I understand it all; Thou art serving and working for me. But since Thou dost employ Thy whole life for the love of me, so grant, I pray Thee, my dear Saviour, that I may employ all the rest of my life for Thy love. Look not at my past life: it has been a life of sorrow and tears both for me and for Thee,—a life of disorder, a life of sins. Oh, permit me at least to keep Thee company during the remainder of my days, and to labour and suffer with Thee in the shop of Nazareth, and afterwards to die with Thee on Calvary, embracing that death which Thou hast destined for me. My dear Jesus, my Love, suffer me not to leave and forsake Thee again, as I have done in times past. Thou, my God, art suffering such poverty in a shop, hidden, unknown, and despised; and I, a vile worm, have gone about seeking honours and pleasures, and for the sake of these have separated myself from Thee, O sovereign Good! No, my Jesus, I love Thee; and because I love Thee, I will not remain any longer separated from Thee. I renounce all things, in order to unite myself to Thee, my hidden and despised Redeemer. Thy grace gives me more happiness than have all the vanities and pleasures of the world, for which I have so miserably forsaken Thee. Eternal Father, for the merits of Jesus Christ, unite me to Thyself by the gift of Thy holy love. Most holy Virgin, how blessed wert thou, who, being the companion of thy Son in His poor and hidden life, didst make thyself so like to thy Jesus! O my Mother, grant that I also, at least during the short remainder of my life, may endeavour to become like to thee and to my Redeemer.

Meditation VII.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

St. Luke, speaking of the residence of the Infant Jesus in the house at Nazareth, writes: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men" (St. Luke ii. 52). As Jesus grew in age, so did He increase in wisdom: not that He went on every year

acquiring a greater knowledge of things, as is the case with us; for, from the first moment of His life, Jesus was full of all Divine knowledge and wisdom: "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Coloss. ii. 3); but it is said that He advanced, because every day as He advanced in age He manifested more and more His sublime wisdom. Thus it is also said that He advanced in grace with God and men; with God, because all His divine actions, though they did not render Him more holy or increase His merit,—since Jesus was from the first full of sanctity and merit, of whose fulness we have received all graces: "of His fulness we have all received" (St. John i. 16);—yet, nevertheless, these operations of the Redeemer were all sufficient in themselves to increase His grace and merit. He advanced also in grace with men, increasing in beauty and amiability. Oh, how Jesus showed Himself more and more amiable every day of His youth, showing more and more every day the claims He had upon men's love! With what delight did the Holy Youth obey Mary and Joseph! With what recollection of mind did He work! With what moderation did He take His food! With what modesty did He speak! With what sweetness and affability did He converse with all! With what devotion did He pray! In a word, every action, every word, every motion of Jesus, inflamed with love the hearts of all those who beheld Him, and especially of Mary and of Joseph, who had the good fortune to see Him always at their side. Oh, how these holy spouses remained always intent on contemplating and admiring all the operations, the words, and gestures of this Man-God!

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Grow, my beloved Jesus, grow continually for me; grow to teach me Thy virtues by Thy divine examples; grow to consummate the great sacrifice on the cross, on which depends my eternal salvation! Grant also, my Saviour, that I too may grow more in Thy love and grace. Miserable that I have been, I have hitherto only increased in ingratitude towards Thee who hast loved me so much.

O my Jesus, grant that in future it may be just the contrary with me; Thou knowest all my weakness, it is from Thee that I must receive light and strength. Make me know the claims which Thou hast to my love. Thou art a God of infinite beauty and of infinite majesty, who didst not refuse to come down upon this earth and become man for us, and for our sakes to lead an abject and painful life, and to end it by a most cruel death. And where can we ever find an object more amiable and more worthy of love than Thee? Fool that I was, in times past I refused to know Thee, and therefore I have lost Thee. I implore Thy pardon; I am heartily sorry, and I am determined to be entirely devoted to Thee in future. But do Thou assist me; remind me constantly of the life of suffering and the bitter death Thou hast endured for the love of me. Give me light and give me strength. When the devil presents to me forbidden fruit, grant me strength to despise it; and let me not for some vile and momentary good risk losing Thee, O infinite Good. I love Thee, my Jesus, who hast died for me; I love Thee, infinite Goodness; I love Thee, O Beloved of my soul. O Mary, thou art my hope; through thy intercession I hope to obtain grace to love my God from this time forth and for ever, and never to love any but God.

Meditation VIII.

On the loss of Jesus in the Temple.

St. Luke relates (ch. 2) that Mary and Joseph went every year to Jerusalem on the Feast of the Pasch, and took the Infant Jesus with them. It was the custom, says the Ven. Bede, for the Jews to make this journey to the temple, or at least on their return home, the men separated from the women; and the children went at their pleasure, either with their fathers or their mothers. Our Redeemer, who was then twelve years old, remained during this solemnity for three days in Jerusalem: Mary thought He was with Joseph, and Joseph that He was with Mary: 'thinking that He was in the company.' The Holy Child

employed all these three days in honouring His Eternal Father by fasts, vigils, and prayers, and in assisting at the sacrifices, which were all figures of His own great sacrifice on the cross. If He took a little food, says St. Bernard, He must have procured it by begging; and if He took any repose, He could have had no other bed but the bare ground. When Mary and Joseph arrived in the evening at their home, they did not find Jesus; wherefore, full of sorrow, they began to seek Him amongst their relations and friends. At last, returning to Jerusalem, the third day they found Him in the Temple, disputing with the doctors, who, full of astonishment, admired the questions and answers of this wonderful Child. On seeing Him, Mary said, 'Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.' There is not upon earth a sorrow like to that which is felt by a soul that loves Jesus, when she fears that Jesus Christ has withdrawn Himself from her through some fault of hers. This was the sorrow of Mary and Joseph, which afflicted them so much during these days; for they perhaps feared, through their humility, as says the devout Lanspergius, that they had rendered themselves unworthy of the care of such a treasure. Wherefore, on seeing Him, Mary said to Him, in order to express to Him this sorrow: 'Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.' And Jesus answered, 'Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?' Let us learn from this mystery two lessons; the first, that we must leave all our friends and relations when the glory of God is in question. The second, that God easily makes Himself found by those who seek Him: "The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lament. iii. 25).

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O Mary, thou weepest because thou hast lost thy Son for a few days; He has withdrawn Himself from thy eyes, but not from thy heart. Dost thou not see that that pure love with which thou lovest Him keeps Him constantly united and bound to thee? Thou knowest well, that he who loves God cannot but be loved by God, who says, "I

love those that love Me" (Prov. viii. 17); and with St. John, "He that abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him" (1 St. John iv. 16). Wherefore, then, dost thou fear? Wherefore dost thou weep? Leave these tears to me, who have so often lost God through my own fault, by driving Him away from my soul. O my Jesus, how could I offend Thee thus with my eyes open, when I knew that by sinning I should lose Thee? But Thou willest not that the heart that seeks Thee should despair, but rather that it should rejoice: "Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord" (Ps. civ. 3). If hitherto I have forsaken Thee, O my Love, I will now seek, and will seek none but Thee. And provided I possess Thy grace, I renounce all the goods and pleasures of this world; I renounce even my own life. Thou hast said that Thou lovest him who loves Thee; I love Thee, do Thou also love me. I esteem Thy love more than the dominion of the whole world. O my Jesus, I desire not to lose Thee any more; but I cannot trust to myself, I trust in Thee: "In Thee, O Lord, have I put my trust; I shall not be confounded for ever." I beseech Thee, do Thou bind me to Thee, and permit me not to be again separated from Thee. O Mary, through thee have I found my God, whom I had once lost; do thou obtain for me also holy perseverance; wherefore I will also say to thee, with St. Bonaventure, 'In thee, O Lady, have I hoped; let me not be confounded for ever.'

ANOTHER MEDITATION

FOR THE FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

I. Behold how the Eternal Father, having sent His Son to suffer and die for us, commands that on this day He should be circumcised, and should begin to shed His Divine Blood, which He was to shed for the last time on the day of His death upon the cross in a sea of contumely and sorrow. And wherefore? In order that this innocent Son should thus pay the penalties which we have deserved. 'O admirable,' sings the Holy Church, 'admirable condescension of Divine pity towards us! O inestimable love of charity! to redeem Thy servant Thou hast given Thy Son to death!' O eternal God, who could ever have bestowed upon us this infinite gift, but Thou who art infinite goodness and infinite love? O my Lord, if in giving me Thy Son Thou hast given me the dearest treasure Thou hast, it is but right that I should give myself entirely to Thee. Yes, my God, I give Thee my whole self; accept of me, I pray Thee, and let me never depart from Thee again.

II. Behold, on the other hand, the Divine Son, who, full of humility and love towards us, embraces the bitter death destined for Him in order to save us sinners from eternal death, and willingly begins on this day to make satisfaction for us to the Divine justice with the price of His blood. 'He humbled Himself,' says the apostle, 'becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.' Thou, therefore, O my Jesus, hast accepted death for my sake; what, then, shall I do? shall I continue to offend Thee by my sins? No, my Redeemer, I will no longer be ungrateful to Thee. I am sorry from my heart that I have caused Thee so much bitterness in times past. I love Thee, O infinite Goodness, and for the future I will never cease to love Thee.

III. Our Redeemer said: "Greater love can no man have than to lay down his life for his friends." But Thou, O my Jesus, says St. Paul, hast shown greater love than this towards us, by giving Thy life for us who were Thy enemies. Behold one of them, O Lord, at Thy feet. How many times have I, a miserable sinner, renounced Thy friendship because I would not obey Thee! I now see the evil I have done; forgive me, O my Jesus; would that I could die of sorrow for my sins! I now love Thee with my whole soul, and I desire nothing else but to love Thee and to please Thee. O Mary, Mother of God and my Mother, pray to Jesus for me.

Another Meditation

for the feast of the epiphany.

I. The Son of God is born humble and poor in a stable; there indeed the angels of heaven acknowledge Him, singing, "Glory to God in the highest;" but the inhabitants of the earth, for whose salvation Jesus was born, leave Him neglected; only a few shepherds come and acknowledge Him, and confess Him to be their Saviour. But our loving Redeemer desired from the very beginning to communicate to us the grace of redemption, and therefore He begins to make Himself known even to the Gentiles, who neither knew Him nor expected Him. For this purpose He sends the star to give notice to the holy Magi, enlightening them at the same time with internal light, in order that they might come and acknowledge and adore Him as their Redeemer. This was the first and sovereign grace bestowed upon us; our calling to the true faith. O Saviour of the world, what would have become of us if Thou hadst not come to enlighten us? we should be like our forefathers, who worshipped as gods animals, stones, and wood, and consequently we should have been all damned. I give Thee thanks to-day on the part of all men.

II. Behold, the Magi without delay set out on their journey; and by means of the star they arrive at the place where the Holy Infant is lying: "They found the child

with Mary" (St. Matt. ii. 11). They find there only a poor maiden and a poor infant wrapped in poor swaddling-clothes; on entering into that abode, which was a stable for beasts, they feel an interior joy, and their hearts are drawn towards this sweet Infant. That straw, that poverty, those cries of their Infant Saviour, are all darts of love and fire to their enlightened hearts. Yes, my Infant Jesus, the more humbled and poor I behold Thee, the more dost Thou inflame me with Thy love.

III. The Infant looks upon these holy pilgrims with a joyful countenance, and thus shows that He accepts these first-fruits of His redemption. The Divine Mother is also silent, but by her smiling looks welcomes them, and thanks them for the homage done to her Son. They adore Him also in silence, and acknowledge Him for their Saviour and their God, offering Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. O Jesus, my Infant King, I also adore Thee, and offer Thee my miserable heart. Accept of it and change it. Make it wholly Thine own, so that it may love nothing but Thee. My sweet Saviour, save me, and let my salvation be to love Thee always and without reserve. O Mary, most holy Virgin, I hope for this grace from thee.

Another Meditation

for the feast of the sacred name of jesus.

I. The Name of Jesus was given to the Incarnate Word not by men, but by God Himself: "and His Name shall be called Jesus" (St. Luke i. 31), that is, Saviour. A Name of gladness, a Name of hope, a Name of love.

A Name of *gladness*, because if the remembrance of past transgressions afflicts us, this Name comforts us, reminding us that the Son of God became man for this purpose, to make Himself our Saviour. My beloved Saviour, Thou camest down from heaven to seek me, and I, a miserable sinner, have turned my back upon Thee and despised Thy grace and Thy love! But, notwithstanding this, Thou willest my salvation, O my Jesus, and I thank Thee for it and love Thee.

II. A Name of *hope*, because he that prays to the Eternal Father in the Name of Jesus may hope for every grace he asks for: "If you ask the Father any thing in My Name, He will give it you" (St. John xvi. 24). O my God, trusting to this promise, in the Name of Jesus I ask of Thee the pardon of my sins, holy perseverance, and the gift of Thy love. Grant, above all, that the remainder of my life may not be spent in displeasing Thee, but only in loving Thee and doing Thy will, as Thou deservest that I should do.

III. A Name of *love*. St. Bernard says that the Name of Jesus is a sign that represents to us how much God has done for the love of us. For the Name of Jesus brings to our remembrance all the sufferings which Jesus has endured for us in His life and at His death. Wherefore a devout writer says to Him, 'O Jesus, how much hath it cost Thee to be Jesus, that is to say, my Saviour!' O my Jesus, I beseech Thee, do Thou write Thy Name on my poor heart and on my tongue, in order that when I am tempted to sin, I may resist by invoking Thee; so that if I am tempted to despair, I may trust in Thy merits; and that if I feel myself tepid in loving Thee, Thy Name may inflame my heart at the recollection of how much Thou hast loved me. Thy Name, then, will always be my defence, my comfort, and the fire that shall keep me always inflamed with Thy love. Make me, therefore, always to call Thee my Jesus, and to live and die with thy holy Name on my lips, saying even with my last breath, 'I love Thee, my Jesus; my Jesus, I love Thee.' O Mary, my Queen, make me when I am dying invoke thee continually, together with thy Son Jesus!

DISCOURSES

FOR THE NOVENA OF CHRISTMAS.

Discourse I.

THE ETERNAL WORD IS MADE MAN.

"I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?"—*Luke* xii. 49.

The Jews solemnised a day called by them *dies ignis*, the day of fire, in memory of the fire with which Nehemias consumed the sacrifice, upon his return with his countrymen from the captivity of Babylon. Even so, and indeed with more reason, should Christmas-day be called the day of fire, on which a God came as a little child to cast the fire of love into the hearts of men. "I came to cast fire on the earth:" so spoke Jesus Christ; and truly so it was. Before the coming of the Messias, who loved God upon earth? Hardly was He known in a nook of the world, that is, in Judea; and even there how very few loved Him when He came! As to the rest of the world, some worshipped the sun, some the brutes, some the very stones, and others again even viler creatures still. But after the coming of Jesus Christ the name of God became every where known, and was loved by many. After the Redeemer was born, God was more loved by men in a few years than He had before been in the lapse of 4000 years, since the creation of man.

It is a custom with many Christians to anticipate the arrival of Christmas a considerable time beforehand by fitting up in their homes a crib to represent the birth of Jesus Christ; but few there are who think of preparing their hearts, in order that the Infant Jesus may be born in

them, and there find His repose. Among these few, however, we would be reckoned, in order that we too may be made worthy to burn with that happy flame which gives contentment to souls on this earth, and bliss in heaven. Let us consider on this first day how the Eternal Word had no other end in becoming man than to inflame us with His Divine love. Let us ask light of Jesus Christ and of His most holy Mother, and so let us begin.

Adam, our first parent, sins; ungrateful for the great benefits conferred on him, he rebels against God, by a violation of the precept given him not to eat of the forbidden fruit. On this account God is obliged to drive him out of the earthly paradise in this world, and in the world to come to deprive not only Adam, but all the descendants of this rebellious creature, of the heavenly and everlasting Paradise which He had prepared for them after this mortal life. Behold, then, all mankind together condemned to a life of pains and miseries, and for ever shut out from heaven. But hearken to God, who, as Isaias tells us in his fifty-second chapter, would seem, after our manner of understanding, to give vent to His affliction in lamentations and wailings: "And now what have I here," saith the Lord, "for My people is taken away gratis." 'And now,' says God, 'what delight have I left in heaven, now that I have lost men, who were My delight?' "My delights *were* to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii. 31). But how is this, O Lord? You have in heaven so many seraphim, so many angels; and can You thus take to heart having lost men? Indeed, what need have You of angels or of men to fill up the sum of Your happiness? You have always been, and You are in Yourself, most happy; what can ever be wanting to Your bliss, which is infinite? 'That is all true,' says God; 'but'—(and these are the words of Cardinal Hugo on the above text of Isaias)—'but, losing man, I deem that I have nothing; I consider that I have lost all, since My delight was to be with men; and now these men I have lost, and, poor hapless creatures, they are doomed to live for ever far away from Me.' But how can the Lord call men His delight? Yes, indeed, writes St. Thomas, God loves man just as if man were His

god, and as if without man He could not be happy; 'as if man were the god of God Himself, and without him He could not be happy.'[17] St. Gregory of Nazianzen adds, moreover, that God, for the love He bears to men, seems beside Himself: 'we are bold to say it, God is out of Himself by reason of His immense love;'[18] so runs the proverb, 'love puts the lover beside himself.'

'But no,' then said the Lord, 'I will not lose man; straightway let there be found a Redeemer who may satisfy My justice in behalf of man, and so rescue him from the hands of his enemies and from the eternal death due to him.' And here St. Bernard, in his contemplations on this subject, imagines a struggle to ensue between the justice and the mercy of God. Justice said: 'I no longer exist if Adam be not punished; I perish if Adam die not.' Mercy, on the other hand, says: 'I am lost if man be not pardoned; I perish if he does not obtain forgiveness.' In this contest the Lord decides, that in order to deliver man, who was guilty of death, some innocent one must die: 'Let one die who is no debtor to death.' On earth there was not one innocent. 'Since, therefore,' said the Eternal Father, 'amongst men there is none who can satisfy My justice, let him come forward who will go to redeem man.' The angels, the cherubim, the seraphim, all are silent, not one replies; one voice alone is heard, that of the Eternal Word, Who says: 'Lo, here am I; send Me.' 'Father,' says the only-begotten Son, 'Thy majesty, being infinite, and having been injured by man, cannot be fittingly satisfied by an angel, who is purely a creature; and though Thou mightest accept of the satisfaction of an angel, reflect that, spite of such great benefits bestowed on man, spite of so many promises and threats, We have not yet been able to gain his love, because he is not yet aware of the love We bear him; if We would oblige him without fail to love us, what better occasion can we find, than that, in order to redeem him, I, Your Son, should go upon earth, should there assume human flesh, and pay by My death the penalty due by him; in this manner Your justice is fully satisfied, and at the same time man is thoroughly convinced of Our love!'

'But think,' answered the heavenly Father, 'think, O My Son, that in taking upon Thyself the burden of man's satisfaction Thou wilt have to lead a life full of sufferings!' 'No matter,' replied the Son: 'Lo, here am I, send Me.' 'Think that Thou wilt have to be born in a cave, the shelter of the beasts of the field: thence Thou must flee into Egypt whilst still an Infant, to escape the hands of those very men who, even from Thy tenderest infancy, will seek to take away Thy life.' 'It matters not: Lo, here am I, send Me.' 'Think that, on Thy return to Palestine, Thou shalt there lead a life most arduous, most despicable, passing Thy days as a simple boy in a carpenter's shop.' 'It matters not: Lo, here am I, send Me.' 'Think that when Thou goest forth to preach and to manifest Thyself, Thou wilt have indeed a few, but very few, to follow Thee; the greater part will despise Thee and call Thee impostor, magician, fool, Samaritan; and finally, they will persecute Thee to such a pass that they will make Thee die shamefully on a gibbet by dint of torments.' 'No matter: Lo, here am I, send Me.'[19]

The decree then being passed, that the Divine Son should be made man, and so become the Redeemer of men, the Archangel Gabriel speeds on his way to Mary. Mary accepts Him for her Son: *Et Verbum caro factum est:* "And the Word was made flesh." And thus behold Jesus in the womb of Mary; having now made His entry into the world in all humility and obedience, He says: 'Since, O My Father, men cannot make atonement to Thy offended justice by their works and sacrifices, behold Me, Thy Son, now clothed in mortal flesh, behold Me ready to give Thee in their stead satisfaction with My sufferings and with My death!' "Wherefore when He cometh into the world He saith: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me. . . . . Then said I, Behold, I come. . . . . It is written of Me that I should do Thy will" (Heb. x. 5). So, then, for us miserable worms, and to captivate our love, has a God deigned to become man? Yes, it is a matter of faith, as the Holy Church teaches us: 'For us men, and for our salvation, He came down from heaven . . . . and was made man.' Yes, indeed, so much

has God done in order to be loved by us. Alexander the Great, after he had conquered Darius and subdued Persia, wished to gain the affections of that people, and so went about habited in the Persian costume. In like manner would our God appear to act; in order to draw towards Him the affections of men, He clothed Himself completely after the human fashion, and appeared made man: "in shape found as a man" (Phil. ii. 7). And by this means He wished to make known the depth of the love which He bore to man: "The grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men" (Tit. ii. 11). Man does not love Me, would God seem to say, because He does not see Me; I wish to make Myself seen by him and to converse with him, and so make Myself loved: "He was seen upon earth, and conversed with men" (Baruch iii. 38). The Divine love for man was extreme, and so it had been from all eternity: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3). But heretofore it had not appeared how great and inconceivable it was. Then it truly appeared, when the Son of God showed Himself a little one in a stable on a bundle of straw: "The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared." The Greek text reads: "The singular love of God towards men appeared." St. Bernard says that from the beginning the world had seen the power of God in the creation, and His wisdom in the government of the world; but only afterwards, in the Incarnation of the Word, was it seen how great was His mercy.[20] Before God was seen made man upon earth, men could not conceive an idea of the Divine goodness; therefore did He take mortal flesh, that, appearing as man, He might make plain to men the greatness of His benignity.[21] And in what manner could the Lord better display to thankless man His goodness and His love? Man, by despising God, says St. Fulgentius, put himself aloof from God for ever; but as man was unable to return to God, God came in search of him on earth.[22] And St. Augustine had already said as much: 'Because we could not go to the Mediator, He condescended to come to us.' "I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love" (Osee xi. 4). Men allow themselves to be

drawn by love; the tokens of affection shown to them are a sort of chain which binds them, and in a manner forces them to love those who love them. For this end the Eternal Word chose to become man, to draw to Himself by such a pledge of affection (a stronger than which could not possibly be found) the love of men: 'God was made man, that God might be more familiarly loved by man.'[23] It seems that our Redeemer wished to signify this very thing to a devout Franciscan called Father Francis of St. James, as is related in the Franciscan Diary for the 15th of December. Jesus frequently appeared to him as a lovely infant; but the holy friar longing in his fervour to hold Him in his arms, the sweet child always fled away; wherefore the servant of God lovingly complained of these departures. One day the Divine Child again appeared to him; but how? He came with golden chains in His hands, to give him to understand that now He came to make him His prisoner, and to be Himself imprisoned by him, never more to be separated. Francis, emboldened at this, fastened the chains to the foot of the Infant, and bound Him round his heart; and, in good truth, from that time forwards it seemed to him as if he saw the beloved child in the prison of his heart made a perpetual prisoner. That which Jesus did with this His servant on this occasion, He really has done with all men when He was made man; He wished with such a prodigy of love to be, as it were, enchained by us, and at the same time to enchain our hearts by obliging them to love Him, according to the prophecy of Osee: "I will draw them with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love" (Osee xi. 4).

In divers ways, says St. Leo, had God already benefited man; but in no way has He more clearly exhibited the excess of His bounty than in sending him a Redeemer to teach him the way of salvation, and to procure for him the life of grace. 'The goodness of God has imparted gifts to the human race in various ways; but it surpassed the ordinary bounds of its abundant kindness when, in Christ, mercy itself came down to those who were in sin, truth to those wandering out of the way, and life to those who were dead.'[24] St. Thomas asks why the Incarnation of the

Word is called the work of the Holy Ghost: *Et incarnatus et de Spiritu Sancto.* It is certain that all God's works, styled by theologians *opera ad extra*, or external works, are the works of all the three Divine Persons. And why therefore should the Incarnation be attributed solely to the Person of the Holy Ghost? The chief reason which the angelic doctor assigns for it is, because all the works of Divine love are attributed to the Holy Ghost, who is the substantial love of the Father and of the Son; and the work of the Incarnation was purely the effect of the surpassing love which God bears to man: 'But this proceeded from the very great love of God, that the Son of God should assume flesh to Himself in the womb of the Virgin.'[25] And this the prophet would signify when he says, "God will come from the south" (Habac. iii. 3); that is, observes the Abbot Rupert, 'From the great charity of God, He has shone upon us.' For this purpose, again writes St. Augustine, the Eternal Word came upon earth, to make known to man how dearly God loved him.[26] And St. Lawrence Justinian: 'In no instance has He so clearly manifested His amiable charity to men as when God was made man.'[27]

But what still more evinces the depth of the Divine love towards the human race is, that the Son of God should come in search of him, whilst man was fleeing away from Him. This the Apostle declares in these words, "No where doth He take hold of the angels; but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold" (Heb. iii. 16). On which St. John Chrysostom thus comments, 'He says not, He received, but He seized hold of; from the figure of those who are in pursuit of fugitives, that they may effect their capture.'[28] Thus God came from heaven, to arrest, as it were, ungrateful man in his flight from Him. It is as if He had said, O man, behold it is nothing but the love of thee that has brought Me on earth to seek after thee. Why wilt thou flee from Me? Stay with Me, love Me; do not avoid Me, for I greatly love thee. God came, then, to seek lost man; and that man might the more easily comprehend the love of this his God for him, and might surrender his love in return to one who so deeply loved him, He willed, the first time of His appearance under a visible form, to

show Himsel as a tender infant, laid upon straw. 'O blessed straw, fairer than roses or lilies,' exclaims St. Peter Chrysologus, 'what favoured land produced you? Oh, what an enviable lot is yours, to serve as a bed for the King of Heaven! But, alas!' continues the Saint, 'alas! you are but cold for Jesus; for you know not how to warm Him in that damp cavern, where He is now shivering with cold; but you are fire and flames for us, since you supply us with a flame of love which rivers of water shall never quench.'[29] It was not enough, says St. Augustine, for the Divine love to have made us to His own image in creating the first man Adam; but He must also Himself be made to our image in redeeming us. Adam partook of the forbidden fruit, beguiled by the serpent, which suggested to Eve that if she ate of that fruit she should become like to God, acquiring the knowledge of good and evil; and therefore the Lord then said, "Behold Adam is become one of us" (Gen. iii. 22). God said this ironically, and to upbraid Adam for his rash presumption; but after the Incarnation of the Word we can truly say, 'Behold God is become like one of us.'[30] 'Look, then, O man,' exclaims St. Augustine, 'thy God is made thy brother;' thy God is made like thee, a son of Adam, as thou art; He has put on thy self-same flesh, has made Himself passible, liable to suffer and to die as thou art. He could have assumed the nature of an angel; but no, He would take on Himself thy very flesh, that thus He might give satisfaction to God with the very same flesh (though sinless) of Adam the sinner. And He even gloried in this, oftentimes styling Himself the Son of Man; hence we have every right to call Him our brother. It was an immeasurably greater humiliation for God to become man, than if all the princes of the earth, than if all the angels and saints of heaven, with the Divine Mother herself, had been turned into a blade of grass, or into a handful of clay; yes, for grass, clay, princes, angels, saints, are all creatures; but between the creature and God there is an infinite difference.

Ah, exclaims St. Bernard, the more a God has humbled Himself for us in becoming man, so much the more has He made His goodness known to us: 'the smaller He

has become by humility, the greater He has made Himself in bounty.' But the love which Jesus Christ bears to us, cries out the Apostle, irresistibly urges and impels us to love Him: "The charity of Christ presseth us" (2 Cor. v. 14). O God! did not faith assure us of it, who could ever believe that a God, for love for such a worm as man is, should Himself become a worm like him?' A devout author says, Suppose, by chance, that, passing on your way, you should have crushed to death a worm in your path; and then some one, observing your compassion for the poor reptile, should say to you: Well, now, if you would restore that dead worm to life, you must first yourself become a worm like it, and then must shed all your blood, and make a bath of it in which to wash the worm, and so it shall revive; what would you reply? Certainly you would say: And what matters it to me whether the worm be alive or dead, if I should have to purchase its life by my own death. And much more would you say so if it was not an inoffensive worm, but an ungrateful asp, which, in return for all your benefits, had made an attempt upon your life. But even should your love for that reptile reach so far as to induce you to suffer death in order to restore it to life, what would men say then? and what would not that serpent do for you, whose death had saved it, supposing it were capable of reason? But this much has Jesus Christ done for you, most vile worm; and you, with the blackest ingratitude, have tried oftentimes to take away His life; and your sins would have done so, were Jesus liable to die any more. How much viler are you in the sight of God than is a worm in your own sight! What difference would it make to God had you remained dead and for ever reprobate in your sins, as you well deserved? Nevertheless, this God had such a love for you, that, to release you from eternal death, He first became a worm like you, and then, to save you, would lavish upon you His heart's blood, even to the last drop, and endure the death which you had justly deserved.

Yes, all this is of faith: *Et Verbum caro factum est* (St. John i. 14). "He hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Apoc. i. 5). The Holy Church

declares herself to be filled with terror at the idea of the work of redemption: 'I considered Thy work, and was afraid' (Resp. 3, in 2 Noct. Circum.). And this the prophet said of old: "O Lord, I have heard Thy hearing, and was afraid. . . . . Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people; for salvation with Thy Christ" (Habac. iii. 3, 14). Hence St. Thomas terms the mystery of the Incarnation *miraculum miraculorum*, the miracle of miracles; a miracle above all comprehension, in which God showed how powerful was His love towards men, which of God made Him man, of Creator a creature. The Creator, says St. Peter Damian, springs from the creature, of Lord it made Him servant, of impassible subject to sufferings and to death:[31] "He hath showed might in His arm" (St. Luke i. 51). St. Peter of Alcantara, one day hearing the Gospel sung which is appointed for the third Mass on Christmas night: *In principio erat Verbum, etc.*, in reflecting on this mystery became so inflamed with Divine love, that, in a state of ecstasy, he was borne a considerable space through the air to the foot of the Blessed Sacrament.[32] And St. Augustine said that his soul could feast for ever on the contemplation of the exalted goodness of God, manifested to us in the work of human redemption.[33] For this reason it was that the Lord sent this Saint, on account of his fervent devotion to this mystery, to inscribe these words on the heart of St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi: *Et Verbum caro factum est:* "And the Word was made flesh."

Whosoever loves, has no other end in loving but to be loved again: God, then, having so dearly loved us, seeks nothing else from us, as St. Bernard remarks, but our love: 'When God loves, He desires nothing else than to be loved.'[34] Wherefore, he goes on with this admonition to each one of us: 'He has made known His love, that He may experience thine.' O man, whoever thou art, thou hast witnessed the love which God has borne thee in becoming man, in suffering and dying for thee; how long shall it be before God shall know by experience and by deeds the love thou bearest Him? Ah! truly every man at the sight of a God clothed in flesh, and choosing to lead a life of such durance,

and to suffer a death of such ignominy, ought to be enkindled with love towards a God so loving. "Oh, that Thou wouldst rend the heavens and wouldest come down: the mountains would melt away at Thy presence . . . the waters would burn with fire" (Isaias lxiv. 1, 2). Oh, that Thou wouldst deign, my God! (thus cried out the prophet before the arrival of the Divine Word upon earth) to leave the heavens, and descend here to become man amongst us! Ah, then, on beholding Thee like one of themselves, the mountains would melt away, men would surmount all obstacles, all difficulties, in observing Thy laws and Thy counsels; the waters would burn with fire! Oh, surely Thou wouldst enkindle such a furnace in the human heart, that even the most frozen souls must catch the flame of Thy blessed love! And, in fact, after the Incarnation of the Son of God, how brilliantly has the fire of Divine love shone to many loving souls! And it may be indeed asserted, without fear of contradiction, God was more beloved in one century after the coming of Jesus Christ than in the entire forty preceding centuries. How many youths, how many of the nobly born, and how many monarchs even, have left wealth, honours, and their very kingdoms, to seek the desert or the cloister, that there, in poverty and obscure seclusion, they might the more unreservedly give themselves up to the love of this their Saviour! How many martyrs have gone rejoicing, and making merry on their way to torments and to death! How many tender young virgins have refused the proferred hands of the great ones of this world, in order to go and die for Jesus Christ, and so repay in some measure the affection of a God, who stooped down to become incarnate, and to die for love of them!

Yes, all this is most true; but now comes a tale for tears. Has this been the case with all men? Have all sought thus to correspond with this immense love of Jesus Christ? Alas, my God, the greater part have combined to repay Him with nothing but ingratitude! And you also, my brother, tell me, what sort of return have you made up to this time for the love your God has borne you? Have you always shown yourself thankful? Have you ever

seriously reflected what those words mean, a God to be made man, and to die for thee? A certain man, assisting one day at Mass without devotion, as too many do, at these concluding words of the last Gospel: *Et Verbum caro factum est:* "And the Word was made flesh:" made no external act of reverence; at the same instant a devil struck him a severe blow, saying, 'Thankless wretch! thou hearest that a God was made man for thee, and dost thou not even deign to bend the knee? Oh, if God had done the like for me, I should be eternally occupied in thanking Him!' Tell me, O Christian! what more could Jesus Christ have done to win thy love? If the Son of God had engaged to rescue from death His own Father, what lower humiliation could He stoop to than to assume human flesh, and lay down His life in sacrifice for His salvation? Nay, I say more; had Jesus Christ been a mere man, instead of one of the divine Persons, and had wished to gain by some token of affection the love of His God, what more could He have done than He has done for thee? If a servant of thine had given for thy love his very life-blood, would he not have riveted thy heart to him, and obliged thee to love him in mere gratitude? And how comes it then, that Jesus Christ, though He has laid down His life for thee, has still failed to win thy love?

Alas! men hold in contempt the Divine love, because they do not, or, rather let us say, because they will not, understand what a treasure it is to enjoy Divine grace, which, according to the Wise Man, is an infinite treasure: "An infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God" (Wisd. vii. 14). Men appreciate the good graces of a prince, of a prelate, of a nobleman, of a man of letters, and even of a vile animal; and yet these same persons set no stead by the grace of God,—but renounce it for mere smoke, for a brutal gratification, for a handful of earth, for a whim, for nothing. What sayest thou, my dear brother? Dost thou wish still to be ranked among these ungrateful ones? For, if thou dost not wish for God, says St. Augustine, if thou canst meet with something better than God: 'Desire something better, if thou dost deserve something better.' Go, find thyself a

prince more courteous, a master, a brother, a friend more amiable, and who has shown thee a deeper love. Go, seek for thyself one who is better qualified than God to make thee happy in the present life and in the life to come. Whoever loves God has nothing to fear, and God cannot help loving in return one who loves Him: "I love those who love me" (Prov. viii. 17). And what shall he be afraid of, who is the beloved of God? "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" (Ps. xxvi. 1.) So said David, and so said the sisters of Lazarus to our Blessed Lord: "He whom thou lovest is sick" (St. John xi. 5). It was enough for them to know that Jesus Christ loved their brother, to convince them that He would do every thing for his recovery. But how, on the contrary, can God love those who despise His love? Come, then, let us once for all make the resolution to give the tribute of our love to a God who has so sincerely loved us. And let us continually beseech Him to grant us the precious gift of His holy love. St. Francis of Sales said, that this grace of loving God was the grace which we ought to pray God for more than for any other; because with Divine love all good comes to a soul: "All good things come together with her" (Wisd. vii. 11). This made St. Augustine say, 'Love, and do whatever you like.' Whoever loves a person, avoids every thing that may offend him, and always seeks what may give him most pleasure. Thus is it with one who really loves God; he can never deliberately do any thing to offend Him, but he studies in every possible manner to please Him.

And in order the more quickly and the more surely to obtain this gift of Divine love, let us have recourse to the foremost of God's lovers—I mean, to Mary His Mother, who was so inflamed with His holy love, that the devils, as St. Bonaventure assures us, had not the boldness even to tempt her: 'They were scared away by her burning charity, so that they dared not approach her.' And Richard adds, that even the seraphim themselves might descend from their lofty throne in heaven to take a lesson in love from the heart of Mary. And because, continues St. Bonaventure, the heart of Mary was a complete furnace of Divine

love, therefore all who love this Blessed Mother and address themselves to her, shall be inflamed by her with the same love; she will make them resemble herself.

COLLOQUY.

O ignis, qui semper ardes, accende me, let us say with St. Augustine, 'O fire, ever burning, inflame me.' O Word Incarnate, Thou wert made man to enkindle Divine love in our hearts: and how couldst Thou have met with such a want of gratitude in the hearts of men? Thou hast spared nothing to induce them to love Thee; Thou hast even gone so far as to give Thy blood and Thy life for them: and how, then, can men still remain so ungrateful? Do they, perchance, not know it? Yes, they know it, and they believe that for them Thou hast come down from heaven to put on mortal flesh, and to load Thyself with our miseries; they know that for their love Thou hast led a painful life, and embraced an ignominious death; and how, then, can they live forgetful of Thee? They love relatives, friends; they love even animals: if from them they receive any token of good-will, they are anxious to repay it; and yet towards Thee alone are they so loveless and ungrateful. But, alas! in accusing them, I am my own accuser: I who have treated Thee worse than any one else. But Thy goodness encourages me, which I feel has borne with me so long, in order at length to pardon me, and to inflame me with Thy love, provided I will but repent and love Thee. Indeed, my God, I do wish to repent; and I grieve with my whole soul for having offended Thee; I wish to love Thee with my whole heart. I am well aware, my Redeemer, that my heart is no longer worthy of Thy acceptance, since it has forsaken Thee for the love of creatures; but at the same time, I see that Thou art willing to have it, and with my entire will I dedicate it and present it to Thee. Inflame it, then, wholly with Thy Divine love, and grant that from this day forward it may never love any other but Thee, O infinite Goodness, worthy of an infinite love. I love Thee, my Jesus; I love Thee, O sovereign Good! I love Thee, O only Love of my soul! O Mary my Mother, you who are

the mother of fair love, *mater pulchræ dilectionis*, do you obtain for me this grace to love my God; I hope it of you.

Discourse II.

THE ETERNAL WORD BEING GREAT BECOMES LITTLE.

"A child is born to us, and a son is given to us." *Is.* ix. 6.

Plato said that 'Love is the loadstone of love: *Magnes amoris amor.*' Hence comes the common proverb, as St. John Chrysostom remarks: '*Si vis amari, ama:* If you wish to be loved, love;' for certainly there is no more effectual means to secure oneself the affections of another than to love him, and to make him aware that he is loved. But, my Jesus, this rule, this proverb, holds good for others, holds good for all, but not for Thee. Men are grateful to all, but not to Thee. Thou art at a loss what further to do, to show men the love Thou bearest them; Thou hast positively nothing more to do, to allure the affections of men; yet, in point of fact, how many are there among mankind who love Thee? And shall we stand in the ranks of these heartless wretches? God has not earned this at our hands; that God, so good, so tender of us, who being great, and of infinite greatness, has thought fit to make Himself little in order to be loved by us. Let us seek light from Jesus and Mary.

To compass the idea of the immense love of God to men in becoming Himself a man and a feeble child for our love, it would be necessary to comprehend His greatness. But what mind of man or angel can conceive the greatness of God, which is indeed infinite? St. Ambrose says, that to say God is greater than the heavens, than all kings, all saints, all angels, is to do an injury to God; just as it would be an injury to a prince, to say that he was greater than a blade of grass, or a small fly. God is greatness itself, and all greatness together is but the smallest atom of the greatness of God. David, contemplating the Divine greatness, and seeing that he could not and never would be able to comprehend it, could only say: "O Lord, who is like to Thee?" (Ps. xxxiv. 10.) O Lord, what great-

ness shall ever be found like to Thine? And how in truth should David ever be able to comprehend it, since his understanding was but finite, and God's greatness infinite? "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and of His greatness there is no end" (Ps. cxliv. 3). "Do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord" (Jer. xxiii. 24). Thus all of us, according to our mode of understanding, are nothing but so many miserable little fishes, living in this immense ocean of the essence of God: "In Him we live, move, and be" (Acts xvii. 28).

What are we, then, in respect of God? And what are all men, all monarchs of earth, and even all saints and all angels of heaven, confronted with the infinite greatness of God? We are all like or even smaller than a grain of sand in comparison of the rest of the earth: "Behold," says the prophet Isaias, "the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance; behold, the islands are as little dust. . . . . All nations are before Him as if they had no being at all" (Isa. xl. 15, 17).

Now this God, so great, has become a little infant; and for whom? A Child is born to us: for us He is born. And wherefore? St. Ambrose gives us the answer: 'He is a little one, that you might be a perfect man; He is bound in swaddling-clothes, that you might be unbound from the fetters of death; He is on earth, that you might be in heaven.'[35] Behold, then, the Immensity become an infant, whom the heavens cannot contain: see Him imprisoned in poor rags, and laid in a narrow vile manger on a bundle of straw, which was at once His only bed and pillow. 'See,' says St. Bernard, 'see power is ruled, wisdom instructed, virtue sustained. God taking milk and weeping, but comforting the afflicted.' A God Almighty so tightly wrapped in swathing-bands that He cannot stir! A God, who knows all things, made mute and speechless! A God, who rules heaven and earth, needing to be carried in the arms! A God who feeds all men and animals, Himself having need of a little milk to support Him! A God who consoles the afflicted, and is the joy of Paradise, Himself weeps and moans and has to be comforted by another!

In fine, St. Paul says, "that the Son of God, coming on earth, emptied Himself" (Phil. ii. 5): He annihilated Himself, so to say. And why? To save man and to be loved by man. 'Where Thou didst empty Thyself,' says St. Bernard, 'there did mercy, there did charity more brilliantly appear.' Yes, my dear Redeemer, in proportion as Thy abasement was great in becoming man and in being born an infant, so was Thy mercy and love shown to be greater towards us, and this with a view to win over our hearts to Thyself. The Jews, although by so many signs and wonders they had a certain knowledge of the true God, were not, however, satisfied; they wished to behold Him face to face. God found means to comply even with this desire of men; He became man, to make himself visible to them; 'knowing,' says St. Peter Chrysologus, 'that mortals felt an anguish of desire to see Him, God chose this method of making Himself visible to them.'[36] And to render Himself still more attractive in our eyes, He would make His first appearance as a little child, that in this guise He might be the more charming and irresistible; He showed Himself an infant, that He might make Himself the more acceptable in our eyes, says the same St. Chrysologus. 'For our advantage was this emptying made;'[37] for this indeed was the form most suitable to win our love. The prophet Ezechiel rightly exclaimed, that the time of Thy coming on earth, O Incarnate Word, should be a time of love, the season of lovers: "Behold, Thy time was the time of lovers" (Ezech. xvi. 8). And what object had God in loving us thus ardently, and in giving us such clear proofs of His love, other than that we might love Him? 'God loves only in order to be loved,' says St. Bernard. God Himself had already said as much: "And now, O Israel, what does the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear and love Him" (Deut. x. 12).

In order to force us to love Him, He would not commission others, but chose to come Himself in person to be made man and to redeem us. St. John Chrysostom makes a beautiful reflection on these words of the apostle:[38] "For no where doth He take hold of the angels, but of the seed of Abraham He taketh hold" (Heb. ii. 16). Why, asks

the Saint, did he not say *received*, but rather *apprehended*? Why did not St. Paul simply say, that God assumed human flesh; why would he affirm with marked emphasis that He took it as it were by force, according to the strict meaning of the word *apprehend*? He answers that he spoke thus, making use of the metaphor of those who give chase to the flying; by this he would convey the idea that God already longed to be loved by man, but man turned his back upon Him, and cared not even to know of His love; therefore God came from heaven, and took human flesh, to make Himself known in this way, and to make Himself loved as it were by force by ungrateful man, who fled from Him. For this, then, did the Eternal Word become man; for this He, moreover, became an infant. He could, indeed, have appeared upon this earth a full-grown man, as the first man Adam appeared. No, the Son of God wished to present Himself under the form of a sweet little child, that thus He might the more readily and the more forcibly draw to Himself the love of man. Little children of themselves are loved at once, and to see them and to love them is the same thing. With this view, says St. Francis of Sales, the Eternal Word chose first to be seen among men as an infant, to conciliate to Himself the love of all mankind. St. Peter Chrysologus writes:[39] 'How should He come, who wishes to drive away fear, to seek love? What breast so savage as not to soften before such a childhood, what hardness which it will not subdue, what love does it not claim? Thus, therefore, He would be born, who willed to be loved and not feared.' The saint would say, that if our Redeemer had come to be feared and respected by men, He would have come as a full-grown man and with royal dignity; but because He came to gain our love, He chose to come and to show Himself as an infant, and the poorest of infants, born in a cold stable between two animals, laid in a manger on straw, without clothing or fire to warm His shivering little limbs: 'thus would He be born, who willed to be loved and not feared.' Ah, my Lord! who was it that drew Thee from heaven to be born in a stable? It was love, the love Thou bearest towards men. Who took Thee from the right hand of Thy Father,

where Thou sittest, and placed Thee in a manger? Who snatched Thee from Thy throne above the stars, and put Thee to lie on a little straw? Who changed Thy position from the midst of angels, to be placed betwixt a pair of beasts? It was all the work of love; Thou inflamest the seraphim, and dost Thou now shiver with cold? Thou supportest the heavens, and must Thou be now carried in the arms? Thou providest food for men and beasts, and now dost Thou crave a little milk to sustain Thy life? Thou makest the seraphim happy, and now dost Thou weep and moan? Who has reduced Thee to such misery? Love has done it: 'thus would He be born, who willed to be loved and not feared.'

Love then, love, O souls, exclaims St. Bernard, love now this little Child, for He is exceedingly to be loved. 'Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised. The Lord is a little one, and exceedingly to be loved.'[40] Yes, says the Saint, this God was already existing from eternity, as He is now, worthy of all praise and reverence for His greatness, as David has sung: "Great is the Lord and exceedingly to be praised." But now that we behold Him become a little infant, needing milk, and unable to stir Himself, trembling with cold, moaning and weeping, looking for some one to take and warm and comfort Him; ah, now indeed does He become the most cherished one of our hearts! 'The Lord is a little one, and exceedingly to be loved!' We ought to adore Him as our God, but our love ought to keep pace with our reverence towards a God so amiable, so loving. St. Bonaventure reminds us that, 'a child finds his delight with other children, with flowers, and to be in the arms.' The Saint's meaning is, that if we would please this Divine Infant, we too must become children, simple and humble; we must bring Him flowers of virtue, of meekness, of mortification, of charity; we must clasp Him in the arms of our love. And, O man, adds St. Bernard, what more do you wait to see before you will give yourself wholly to God? See with what labour, with what ardent love your Jesus has come down from heaven to seek you. Hearken, he goes on to say, how, scarcely yet born, His wailings call to you, as if He would say: O soul

of mine, it is thee I am seeking; for thee, and to obtain thy love, I am come from heaven to earth. 'Having scarcely quitted the Virgin's womb, He calls thy beloved soul after the manner of infants, ah, ah, My soul, My soul, I am seeking you, for you am I making this pilgrimage.'

O God, even the very brutes, if we do them a kindness, if we give them some trifle, are so grateful for it; they come near us, they do our bidding after their own fashion, and they show symptoms of gladness at our approach. And how comes it, then, that we are so ungrateful towards God, the same God who has bestowed His whole self upon us, who has descended from heaven to earth, has become an infant to save us and to be loved by us? Come, then, let us love the Babe of Bethlehem, *Amemus Puerum de Bethlehem*, is the enraptured cry of St. Francis; let us love Jesus Christ, who has sought in the midst of such sufferings to attach our hearts to Him.

And for love of Jesus Christ we ought to love our neighbours, even those who have offended us. The Messias is called by Isaias, 'Father of the world to come:' now in order to be sons of this Father, Jesus admonishes us that we must love our enemies, and do good to those who injure us: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you . . . that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven" (St. Matt. v. 45). And of this He Himself set us the example on the cross, praying His Eternal Father to forgive those who were crucifying Him. 'He who pardons his enemy,' says St. John Chrysostom, 'cannot but obtain God's pardon for himself;' and we have the Divine assurance of it: "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven" (St. Luke vi. 37). There was a certain religious, who for the rest had not led a very exemplary life, at the hour of death bewailed his sins, not without great confidence and joy, because said he, 'I have never avenged an injury done me;' as much as to say: It is true that I have offended the Lord, but He has engaged to pardon him who pardons his enemies; I have pardoned all who offended me, so then I am confident God will likewise pardon me.

But to speak with reference to all persons in general; how can we, sinners as we are, despair of pardon, when we

think of Jesus Christ? For this very object the Eternal Word humbled Himself so far as to take human flesh, that He might procure our pardon from God: "I am come, not to call the just, but sinners" (St. Matt. ix. 13). Hence we may address Him in the words of St. Bernard: 'Where Thou didst empty Thyself, there Thy mercy, there Thy charity shone forth the more.' And St. Thomas of Villanova gives us excellent encouragement, saying: What art thou afraid of, O poor sinner? How shall He condemn thee, if thou be penitent, who died expressly that thou mightest not be condemned? How shall He reject thee, if thou desirest to retain Him who came down from heaven to seek thee?

Let not, then, the sinner be afraid, provided he will be no more a sinner, but will love Jesus Christ; let him not be dismayed, but have a full trust; if he abhor sin, and seek after God, let him not be sad, but full of joy: "Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord" (Ps. ciii. 15). The Lord has sworn to forget all injuries done to Him, if the sinner is sorry for them: "If the wicked do penance . . . I will not remember all his iniquities" (Ezech. xviii. 21). And that we might have every motive for confidence, our Saviour became an infant: 'Who is afraid to approach a child?' asks the same St. Thomas of Villanova: 'children do not inspire terror or aversion, but attachment and love,' says St. Peter Chrysologus. It seems that children know not how to be angry; and if perchance at odd times they should be irritated, they are easily soothed; one has only to give them a fruit, a flower, or bestow on them a caress, or utter a kind word to them, and they have already forgiven and forgotten every offence. A tear of repentance, one act of heartfelt contrition, is enough to appease the Infant Jesus. 'You know the tempers of children,' pursues St. Thomas of Villanova; 'a single tear pacifies them, the offence is forgotten. Approach, then, to Him while He is a little one, while He would seem to have forgotten His majesty.' He has put off His Divine majesty, and appears as a child to inspire us with more courage to approach His feet. 'He is born an Infant,' says St. Bonaventure, 'that neither His justice nor His power might intimidate you.'

In order to exempt us from every feeling of distrust, which the idea of His power and of His justice might cause in us, He comes before us as a little babe, full of sweetness and mercy: 'O God!' says Gerson, 'Thou hast hidden Thy wisdom under a childish age, that it might not accuse us.' O God of mercy, lest Thy divine wisdom might reproach us with our offences against Thee, Thou hast hidden it under an infant's form: 'Thy justice under humility, lest it should condemn.' Thou hast concealed Thy justice under the most profound abasement, that it might not condemn us: 'Thy power under weakness, lest it should torment.' Thou hast disguised Thy power in feebleness, that it might not visit us with chastisement. St. Bernard makes this reflection: Adam, after his sin, on hearing the voice of God, "Adam, where art thou?" was filled with dismay: "I heard Thy voice, and was afraid." But, continues the Saint, now, the Incarnate Word being made man upon earth, He has laid aside all semblance of terror: 'Do not fear; He seeks thee not to punish, but to save thee. Behold He is a child, and voiceless; for the voice of a child is calculated rather to excite compassion than fear; the Virgin Mother wraps His delicate limbs in swaddling-clothes: and art thou still in alarm?'[41] That God, who should punish thee, is born an Infant, and has lost all accents to affright thee, since the accents of a child, being cries of weeping, move us sooner to pity than to fear; thou canst not apprehend that Jesus Christ will stretch out His hands to chastise thee, since His Mother is occupied in swathing them in linen bands. 'Be of good cheer, then, O sinners,' says St. Leo, 'the birth-day of the Lord is the birth-day of peace and joy:' 'The Prince of Peace' was He called by Isaias. Jesus Christ is a Prince, not of vengeance on sinners, but of mercy and of peace, constituting Himself the Mediator betwixt God and sinners. 'If our sins,' says St Augustine, 'are too much for us, God does not despise His blood.' If we cannot ourselves make due atonement to the justice of God, at least the Eternal Father knows not how to disregard the blood of Jesus Christ, who makes payment for us.

A certain knight, called Don Alphonsus Albuquerque,

making once a sea voyage, and the vessel being driven among the rocks by a violent tempest, already gave himself up for lost; but at that moment espying near him a little child, crying bitterly, what did he do? He seized him in his arms, and so lifting him towards heaven, 'O Lord,' said he, 'though I myself be unworthy to be heard, give ear at least to the cries of this innocent child, and save us.' At the same instant the storm abated, and he remained in safety. Let us miserable sinners do in like manner. We have offended God; already has sentence of everlasting death been passed upon us; Divine justice requires satisfaction, and with right. What have we to do? To despair? God forbid! let us offer up to God this Infant, who is His own Son, and let us address Him with confidence: O Lord, if we cannot of ourselves render Thee satisfaction for our offences against Thee, behold this Child, who weeps and moans, who is benumbed with cold on His bed of straw in this cavern; He is here to make atonement for us, and He pleads for Thy mercy on us. Be it that we are undeserving of pardon, the tears and sufferings of this Thy guiltless Son merit it for us, and He entreats Thee to pardon us. This is what St. Anselm advises us to do; he says that Jesus Christ Himself, from His earnest desire not to have us perish, animates each one of us who finds himself guilty before God with these words: O sinner, do not lose heart; if by thy sins thou hast unhappily become the slave of hell, and hast not the means to free thyself, act thus: take Me, offer Me for thyself to the Eternal Father, and so thou shalt escape death, thou shalt be in safety. 'What can be conceived more full of mercy than what the Son says to us: Take Me, and redeem thyself.' This was, moreover, exactly what the Divine Mother taught Sister Frances Farnese. She gave the Infant Jesus into her arms, and said to her: 'Here is my Son for you; be careful to make your profit of Him, by frequently offering Him to His heavenly Father.'

And if we would still have another means to secure our forgiveness, let us obtain the intercession of this same Divine Mother in our behalf; she is all-powerful with her blessed Son to promote the interests of repentant sinners,

as St. John Damascene assures us Yes, for the prayers of Mary, adds St. Antoninus, have the force of commands with her Son, in consideration of the love He bears her: 'The prayer of the Mother of God has the force of a command.' Hence, wrote St. Peter Damian, when Mary goes to entreat Jesus Christ in favour of one who is devout to her, 'she approaches commanding (in a certain sense), not asking, as a mistress, not a handmaid; for the Son honours her by denying her nothing.'[42] For this reason St. Germanus subjoins, that the most holy Virgin, by the authority of mother which she holds, or rather, which she did hold for a time over her Son upon earth, can obtain the pardon of the most abandoned sinner. 'Thou, by the power of thy maternal authority, gainest even for the most enormous sinners the exceeding grace of pardon.'[43]

COLLOQUY.

O my sweet, amiable, and holy Child! Thou art at a loss what more to do to make Thyself beloved by men. It is enough to say, that from being the Son of God Thou wert made the son of man, and that Thou choosest to be born among men like the rest of infants, only poorer and more meanly lodged than the rest, selecting a stable for Thy abode, a manger for Thy cradle, and a little straw for Thy couch. Thou desiredst so to make Thy first appearance before us in the semblance of a poor child, that even from Thy very birth Thou mightest lose no time in attracting our hearts towards Thee; and so Thou wentest on through the remainder of Thy life, ever showing us fresh and more striking tokens of Thy love, so that at length Thou didst will to shed the last drop of Thy blood and die overwhelmed with shame upon the infamous tree of the cross. And how is it that Thou couldest have encountered such ingratitude from the majority of mankind; for I see few indeed that know Thee, and fewer still that love Thee? Ah, my dear Jesus, I too desire to be reckoned of this small number! In time past, it is true, I have not known Thee; but, heedless of Thy love, I have only sought my own gratifications, making no account whatever of Thee and of Thy friendship. But now I am conscious of the wrong I have done;

I am sorry for it, I grieve over it with my whole heart. O my sweet Child and my God, forgive me for the sake of Thy infancy. I love Thee, and that so dearly, O my Jesus, that even if I knew that all mankind were about to rebel against Thee and to forsake Thee, yet I promise never to leave Thee, though it should cost me my life a thousand times. I am well aware that I am indebted to Thee for this light and this good resolution. I thank Thee for it, O my love, and I beseech Thee to preserve it to me by Thy grace. But Thou knowest my weakness, Thou knowest my past treasons; for pity's sake do not abandon me, or I shall fall away even worse than before. Accept of my poor heart to love Thee; there was a time when it cared not for Thee, but now it is enamoured of Thy goodness, O Divine Infant! O Mary! O great Mother of the Incarnate Word! do not you either abandon me; for you are the mother of perseverance, and the stewardess of Divine grace. Help me, then, and help me always; with your aid, O my hope, I trust to be faithful to my God till death.

Discourse III.

THE ETERNAL WORD FROM BEING LORD BECAME A SERVANT.

"He humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant." *Phil.* ii. 7, 8.

On considering the immense mercy of our God in the work of the human redemption, St. Zachary had good reason to exclaim, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, because He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people" (St. Luke i. 68). Blessed for ever be God, who vouchsafed to come down upon earth and to be made man in order to redeem mankind. "That being delivered from the hands of our enemies, we may serve Him without fear." In order that, loosened from the shackles of sin and of death, wherein our enemies held us fast bound and enthralled, we might fearlessly, and with the freedom of the children of God, love Him and serve Him during this life, and afterwards go and possess and enjoy Him face to face in the kingdom of the blessed,—in that kingdom closed against us indeed, heretofore, but now thrown open to us

by our Divine Saviour. So that, in fact, we were all heretofore the slaves of hell; but what has the Eternal Word, our sovereign Lord, done to free us from that slavery? From being Lord He became a servant. Let us consider what a mercy and what an excessive love this has been; but first let us beg light of Jesus and Mary.

Almighty God is Lord of all that is, or that can be in the world: 'In Thy power are all things; for Thou hast created all.' Who can ever deny God the sovereign dominion over all things, if He be the Creator and Preserver of all? "And He hath on His garment and on His thigh written, King of kings and Lord of lords" (Apoc. xix. 16). Maldonatus explains the words 'on His thigh,' to mean here, 'by His own very nature;' and the drift of it is, that to the monarchs of earth outward majesty is annexed by gift and favour of the supreme King, that is God; but God Himself is King by His very nature; so that He cannot possibly be otherwise than King and Lord of all. But this sovereign King, though He bore sway over the angels in heaven, and ruled all creatures, yet did He not rule over the hearts of mankind; mankind was groaning under the miserable tyranny of the devil. Yes, before the coming of Jesus Christ this tyrant was lord, and even made himself worshipped as God, with incense and sacrifices, not only of their animals, but even of their own children and of their own lives; and he, their enemy and tyrant, what return did he make them?—how did he treat them? He tortured their bodies with the most barbarous cruelty, he blinded their minds, and by a path of pain and misery conducted them down to everlasting torments. It was this tyrant that the Divine Word came on purpose to overthrow, and to release mankind from his wretched thraldom, in order that the unfortunate creatures, freed from the darkness of death, rescued from the bondage of this savage monster, and enlightened to know what was the true way of salvation, might serve their real and lawful Master, who loved them as a Father, and from slaves of Satan wished to make them His own beloved children: "That being delivered from the hands of our enemies, we might serve Him without fear." The Prophet Isaias had long ago foretold that

our Redeemer should destroy the empire which Satan held over mankind: "And the sceptre of their oppressor Thou hast overcome" (Is. ix. 4). And why did the prophet call him oppressor? Because, says St. Cyril, this heartless master exacts from the poor sinners who become his slaves heavy tribute, in the shape of passions, hatreds, disorderly affections, by means of which he binds them in a still faster servitude, while at the same time he scourges them. Our Saviour came, then, to release us from the slavery of this deadly foe; but how?—in what manner did He release us? Let us learn from St. Paul what He did: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men" (Phil. ii. 5). He was already, says the Apostle, the only-begotten Son of God, equal to His Father, eternal as His Father, almighty as His Father, immense, most wise, most happy, and sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, of angels and of men, no less than His Father; but for the love of man He stooped to take the lowly form of a servant, by clothing Himself in human flesh, and likening Himself to men; and since sin had made them vassals of the devil, He came in the form of man to redeem them, offering His sufferings and death in satisfaction to the Divine justice for the punishment due to them. Ah! who would have believed it, if holy faith did not assure us of it? Who could ever have hoped for it?—who could ever have conceived it? But faith tells us and assures us that this supreme and sovereign Lord "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant."

From His tenderest childhood, the Redeemer, by becoming a servant, was eager already to begin and wrench from the devil that dominion which he had over man, according to the prophecy of Isaias: "Call his name, hasten to take away the spoils: Make haste to take away the prey" (Is. viii. 3). That is, as St. Jerome explains it, 'Suffer the devil to reign no longer.' Behold Jesus, scarcely born, says the Venerable Bede, before He assumes the form and office of a servant, in order to gain us freedom from the slavery of hell; He causes Himself to be enrolled as a subject of Cæsar, and pays him the tribute: 'Scarcely

born, He is registered in the census of Cæsar, and for our liberation He Himself is inscribed in the list of servitude.'[44] Observe how, in token of His servitude, He begins to pay off our debts by His sufferings; how He allows Himself to be wrapped in swaddling-clothes (a type of the cords which should bind Him at a later day, to be led to death by cruel executioners). 'God suffers Himself,' says a certain author, 'to be bound up in swaddling-bands, because He had come to unbind the world from its debts.' Behold Him during the whole course of His after-life obeying with ready submission a simple Virgin and a man: "He was subject to them" (St. Luke ii. 51). Look at Him as a servant in the poor cottage at Nazareth, employed by Mary and Joseph at one time in smoothing the wood to be worked upon by Joseph in his trade; at another time in collecting the scattered shavings for fuel; then in sweeping the house, in fetching water from the well, in opening or in closing the shop; in fine, says St. Basil, as Mary and Joseph were poor, and obliged to earn a livelihood by the work of their hands, Jesus Christ, in order to practise obedience, and to show towards them that reverence which as to superiors He owed them, endeavoured to render them all the services which lay in His power as man. 'In His early age Jesus was subject to His parents, and obediently underwent every kind of bodily fatigue; for, as they were poor, they necessarily were obliged to labour. But Jesus showed His obedience by His submission to them, by undergoing every kind of labour.'[45] What! a God to serve! a God to sweep the house! a God to work! Ah, how the mere thought of this should inflame us all, and make us burn with love!

Subsequently, when our Saviour went forth to preach, He made Himself the servant of all, declaring that He had come not to be served, but to serve all others: "The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister" (St. Matt. xx. 28). As much as to say, according to the commentary of Cornelius à Lapide: 'I have conducted myself, and still conduct myself, so as to show how I would willingly minister to all, as the servant of all.' Hence Jesus Christ, says St. Bernard, at the close of His

life, was not content to take the form of a simple servant, in order to be at the commands of others, but even of a wicked servant, in order to be punished as such, and so to pay off that punishment which was due to us as the servants of hell in chastisement of our sins. 'Taking not only the form of a servant, that He might obey, but of a wicked servant that He might be chastised, and so pay the penalty of the servant's sin.' Behold, finally, says St. Gregory of Nyssa, how the Lord of all submits as an obedient subject to the unjust sentence of Pilate, and to the hands of His executioners, who barbarously torture and crucify Him. 'The Lord of all is obedient to the sentence of the judge, the king of all does not disdain to feel the hand of the executioners.'[46] St. Peter had said as much before: "He delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly" (1 St. Peter ii. 23). And, like a servant, He is resigned to punishment, as if He had well deserved it: "When He was reviled, He did not revile; and when He suffered, He threatened not." Thus did our God love us to such a pass, that for our love He chose to obey as a servant even unto death, and a death of such extreme bitterness and ignominy as the death of the cross: "Becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). He obeyed, indeed, not as God, but as man, and as a servant, as He had made Himself: "Taking the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men" (Phil. ii. 8). The world stood in admiration of that grand act of charity, which St. Paulinus performed in consenting to become a slave for the ransom of the son of a poor widow. But what comparison does this bear with the charity of our Redeemer, who being God, and in order to rescue us from the slavery of the devil and from death, our just due, chose to become a servant, to be fast bound with cords, to be nailed to the cross, and there in the end to lay down His life in a sea of sorrow and ignominy? In order, says St. Augustine, that the servant might become lord, God chose to become a servant.

'O amazing condescension of Thy bounty towards us! O inestimable tenderness of Thy charity!' exclaims the Holy Church. 'That Thou mightest redeem the servant,

Thou hast delivered up the Son."[47] Thou, then, O God of boundless majesty, hast been so fascinated with love for men, that to redeem these Thy rebellious servants Thou hast consented to condemn Thy only Son to death. But, O Lord, replies the holy man Job: "What is a man, that Thou shouldest magnify him? or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?" (Job vii. 17.) What is man, who is so vile, and has proved so ungrateful to Thee, that Thou shouldest make him so great, by honouring and loving him to such an excess? Tell me (he goes on to say), why is the salvation and happiness of man of so much importance to Thee? Tell me why Thou lovest him so much, that it would seem as if Thy heart was set on nothing else but to love and to make man happy?

Speed on, then, with gladness, O ye souls that love God and hope in God, speed on your way with gladness! What if Adam's sin, and still more our own sins, have wrought sad ruin on us? let us understand that Jesus Christ, by the Redemption, has infinitely more than repaired our ruin: "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound" (Rom. v. 20). Greater (says St. Leo) has been the acquisition which we have made by the grace of our Redeemer, than was the loss which we had suffered by the malice of the devil.[48] Isaias had long ago prophesied, that by means of Jesus Christ man should receive graces from God far surpassing the chastisement merited by his sins: "He hath received of the hand of the Lord double for all his sins" (Is. xl. 2). It is in this sense that Adam the commentator explains this text, as we find in Cornelius à Lapide: 'God hath so given remission of sins to the Church through Christ, that she hath received double (that is manifold blessings) instead of the punishments of sin which she deserved.' The Lord said: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly" (St. John x. 10). I am come to give life to man, and a more abundant measure of life than what they had lost by sin. "Not as the offence, so also the gift" (Rom. viii. 15). Great had been the sin of man; but greater, says the apostle, has been the gift of redemption, which has not only just sufficed for a remedy, but superabundantly: "and

with Him plentiful redemption" (Ps. cxxix. 7). St. Anselm says, that the sacrifice of the life of Jesus Christ surpassed all the debts of sinners: 'The life of that Man surpasses every debt which sinners owe.'[49] For this reason the Church styles the fault of Adam a happy one: 'O happy fault, which deserved to have so great a Redeemer.' It is true that sin has clouded the mind to the knowledge of eternal truths, and has introduced into the soul the concupiscence of sensible goods, forbidden by the Divine command; yes, but what helps and means has not Jesus Christ obtained for us by His merits, in order to procure us light and strength to vanquish all our enemies, and to advance in virtue! The Holy Sacraments, the Sacrifice of Mass, prayer to God through the merits of Jesus Christ,—ah! these are indeed arms and means sufficient, not only to gain the victory over all temptation and concupiscence, but even to run forward and fly in the way of perfection. It is certain that by these very means given to us, all the saints of the new law have become saints. Ours, then, is the fault, if we do not avail ourselves of them.

Oh, how much more are we bound to thank Almighty God for having brought us into life after the coming of the Messias! How much greater blessings have we received after the accomplishment of redemption by Jesus Christ! How did Abraham desire; how did the prophets and patriarchs of the Old Testament long to see the Redeemer born! But they saw Him not. They deafened the heavens, so to speak, with their groans of desire and with their ardent prayers: "Drop down dew, ye heavens from above, and let the clouds rain the just" (Is. xlv. 8), was their incessant exclamation. Rain down, O heavens, and send us the Just One, to appease the wrath of that God whom we ourselves cannot appease, because we are all sinners: "Send forth, O Lord, the Lamb, the Ruler of the earth" (Is. xvi. 1). Send, O Lord, the Lamb, who by sacrificing Himself shall satisfy Thy justice for us, and so shall reign in the hearts of men, who are living on this earth the unhappy slaves of the devil: "Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy, and grant us Thy salvation" (Ps. lxxxiv. 8). Hasten and show us, O God of mercies, that greatest

mercy which Thou hast already promised us, namely, our Saviour. Such were the aspirations and longing exclamations of the Saints. But for all that, during the space of 4000 years they had not the happy lot to see the Messias born: we, however, have had this happiness. But what are we doing? What knowledge have we to take advantage of it? Do we know how to love this amiable Redeemer who is come at last, who has already ransomed us from the hands of our foes, has freed us by His own death from the eternal death which we had deserved, has thrown open Paradise for us, has provided us with so many Sacraments, and with so many aids to serve Him and love Him in peace during this life, that we might go and enjoy Him for ever in the life to come? He was, says St. Ambrose, 'wrapped up in swaddling-clothes, that you might be loosed from snares; His poverty is my patrimony; the feebleness of the Lord is my strength; His tears have washed away my guilt.' Exceeding would be your ingratitude to your God, O Christian soul, if you were not to love Him, after He has been pleased to be bound in swaddling-clothes, that you might be released from the chains of hell; after He has become poor, that you might be made partaker of His riches; after He has made Himself weak, to give you power over your enemies; after He has chosen to suffer and to weep, that by His tears your sins might be washed away. But, O God, how few there are who show themselves grateful for such immense love by faithfully loving this their Redeemer! Alas! the greater part of men, after so incomparable a benefit, after so many great mercies and so much love, still say to God: Lord, we will not serve Thee; we would rather be slaves of the devil and condemned to hell than be Thy servants. Listen how God upbraids such thankless wretches: "Thou hast burst My bands, and thou saidst: I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 2). What say you, my brother? have you too been one of these? But tell me, whilst living far from God and the slave of the devil, tell me, have you felt happy? Have you been at peace? Ah, no, the Divine words can never fail: "Because thou didst not serve the Lord thy God with joy and gladness of heart, thou shal

serve thy enemy in hunger and thirst, and nakedness, and in want of all things" (Deut. xxviii. 47). Since thou hast preferred to serve thy enemy rather than to serve thy God, behold how that tyrant has treated thee. He has made thee groan as a slave in chains, poor, afflicted, and deprived of every interior consolation. But come, rise up; God speaks to thee whilst thou mayest still be freed from the fetters of death which bind thee: "Loose the bonds from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion" (Is. lii. 2). Make haste while time is left, unbind thyself, poor soul, who hast become the voluntary slave of hell, strike off these cursed chains that hold thee fast as a prey for hell, and bind thyself instead with my chains of gold, chains of love, chains of peace, chains of salvation: "her bands are a healthful binding" (Ecclus. vi. 31). But in what manner are souls bound to God? By love: "Have charity, which is the bond of perfection" (Coloss. iii. 14). A soul that always walks by the single way of the fear of punishment, and from this single motive avoids sin, is always in great danger of making a relapse before long into sin; but he that attaches himself to God by love is sure not to lose Him as long as he loves Him; and for this reason we must continually beg God to grant us the gift of His holy love, always praying and saying: O Lord, keep me united to Thee, never suffer me to be separated from Thee and from Thy love. The fear which we ought rather to desire and beg of God is a filial fear, the fear of ever displeasing this our good Lord and Father. Let us also always have recourse to most holy Mary, our Mother, that she may obtain us the grace to love nothing else but God, and that she would so closely unite us by love with her Blessed Son, that we may never more see ourselves separated from Him by sin.

COLLOQUY.

O my Jesus, Thou hast been pleased to become a servant for love of me, and in order to release me from the chains of hell; and not only the servant of Thy Father, but of men and of executioners, even to the laying down of Thy life; and I, for the love of some wretched and poisonous pleasure, have so often forsaken Thy service, and

have become the slave of the devil. A thousand times over I curse those moments in which, by a wicked abuse of my free-will, I despised Thy grace, O infinite Majesty! In pity pardon me, and bind me to Thyself with those delightful chains of love with which Thou keepest Thy chosen souls in closest union to Thee. I love Thee, O Incarnate Word; I love Thee, O my sovereign Good! I have now no other desire but to love Thee; and I have only one fear, that of seeing myself deprived of Thy love. Oh, never suffer me to be separated from Thee again. I beseech Thee, O my Jesus, by all the sufferings of Thy life and of Thy death, do not suffer me ever more to leave Thee: 'Suffer me not to be separated from Thee, suffer me not to be separated from Thee.' Ah, my God, after all the favours Thou hast shown me, after pardoning me so repeatedly, and when now Thou dost enlighten me with such a clear knowledge, and invitest me to love Thee with such tender affection, if I should ever be so wretched as again to turn my back upon Thee, how could I presume ever to receive pardon afresh? and not rather be afraid that in that same instant Thou wouldst cast me headlong into hell? Ah, never permit it; let me say again: 'Suffer me not to be separated from Thee.' O Mary, my refuge, you have hitherto been my sweet advocate; for it was you that prevailed on God still to wait for me and to pardon me with so much mercy; help me at present, obtain for me the grace to die, and to die a thousand times, sooner than ever again to lose the grace of my God.

Discourse IV.

THE ETERNAL WORD FROM BEING INNOCENT BECOMES GUILTY.

"Be comforted, be comforted, my people, saith your God." *Is.* xl. 1.

Previous to the coming of our Redeemer, the whole unhappy race of mankind groaned in misery upon this earth; all were children of wrath, nor was there one who could appease God, justly indignant at their sins: "Behold, Thou art angry, and we have sinned: . . . . there is none that riseth up, and taketh hold of Thee" (Is. lxiv.

5-7). Yes, because it is God Himself who has been offended by man: man, being nothing but a miserable creature, was unable, by whatever extent of chastisement, to make atonement for the injury offered to an infinite Majesty: there was need of another god to satisfy the Divine justice. But such a god did not exist, neither could there be found any besides the one God alone: on the other hand, the person offended could not make satisfaction to himself; so that ours was a desperate case. But take comfort, take comfort, O men, saith the Lord by the mouth of Isaias: "Be comforted, be comforted, my people, saith your God; for her evil is come to an end" (Is. xl. 1). And the reason is, because God Himself hath discovered a way of saving man, while at the same time His justice and His mercy shall both be satisfied: "Justice and peace have kissed" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). The Son of God has Himself become man, has taken the form of a sinner, and loading His own shoulders with the burden of satisfying for mankind, He has made full compensation to the Divine justice for the penalty merited by men, by the sufferings of His life and of His death; and thus the opposite claims of justice and of mercy have been paid. Has Jesus Christ, then, from being innocent become guilty, to free men from eternal death? that is to say, has He chosen to pass for a sinner? Yes, the love which He bears to mankind has brought Him even to this pass. Let us consider Him in this state; bu let us first beg light of Jesus and Mary to profit by it.

What was Jesus Christ? He was, replies St. Paul, "holy, innocent, undefiled" (Heb. vii. 26). He was, to speak more correctly, sanctity itself, innocence itself, purity itself, since He was true Son of God, true God as His Father; and so dear to that Father, that the Father there on the banks of the Jordan declared, that in that Son He found all His complacency. But this Son being bent upon freeing mankind from their sins and from the death incurred by them, what did He do? "He appeared to take away our sins," says St. John (1 St. John iii. 5). He presented Himself before His Heavenly Father, and offered Himself to pay for mankind; and then the Father, as the Apostle tell us, sent Him on earth to be clothed in human

flesh, to take the appearance of sinful man, and to be made in all things like to sinners: "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. viii. 3). And then St. Paul adds: "And of sin hath condemned sin in the flesh." And by this he means, according to the explanation of St. John Chrysostom and Theodoret, that the Father sentenced sin to be dethroned from the tyranny which it exercised over mankind, by dooming to death His own Divine Son, who, though He assumed flesh that was to all seeming contaminated with sin, was nevertheless holy and innocent.

God therefore, in order to save mankind, and at the same time to answer the claims of His justice, was pleased to condemn His own Son to a painful life and to a shameful death. And can this ever be true? It is of faith, and St. Paul assures us of it: "He spared not even His own Son; but delivered Him up for us all" (Rom. viii. 32). Jesus Christ Himself affirms it to us: "God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son" (St. John iii. 16). Celius Rodiginus relates, that there was a certain man, called Dœotarus, who had several sons, but loved one of them more than all the rest; insomuch that in order to leave him his whole fortune, he had the monstrous cruelty to murder all the others. But God has done quite the reverse; He has slain His well-beloved Son, His only Son, in order to give salvation to us vile and ungrateful worms: "God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son." Let us weigh these words: "God so loved the world." What? a God condescends to love men, miserable worms, that have been rebellious and ungrateful towards Him, and to love them to such an extent ('the word *so* signifies the vehemence of love,' says St. John Chrysostom),[50] so as to give His only-begotten Son! that He chose to give them His very Son, and that only-begotten one whom He loved as much as Himself! Not a servant, not an angel, not an archangel did He give, but His own Son, subjoins the same holy doctor. But in what manner did He choose to give Him? He gave Him to us lowly, humbled, poor, despised; He gave Him into the hands of slaves to be treated as a miscreant, and even to be put to death, covered with shame, on an infamous gibbet.

O grace! O force of the love of a God! exclaims St. Bernard: 'O grace! O the strength of love!'[51] O God, who would not be touched to hear of such an instance, that a monarch, to release his slave, was compelled to put his only son to death,—that son who was all the love of his father, and was beloved by him as his very self? Had not God done this, says St. John Chrysostom, who could ever have imagined it or hoped for it? 'What things the human mind could never have conceived, could never have hoped for, these things He has bestowed on us.' But, O Lord, it seems like an injustice, to sentence an innocent son to die for the purpose of saving a slave who has offended Thee. According to all human reasoning, says Salvian, one would certainly accuse that man of outrageous injustice, who should kill an innocent son in order to free his servants from the death which they had deserved.[52] Yet no, with God this has not passed for injustice, because the Son made the spontaneous offering of Himself to the Father to satisfy for men: "He was offered, because it was His own will" (Is. liii. 7). Behold, then, how Jesus voluntarily sacrifices Himself as a victim of love for us; behold Him, how as a mute lamb He puts Himself into the hands of the shearer, and, although innocent, He comes to suffer from men the greatest ignominies and torments, without even opening His mouth: "He shall be dumb as a lamb before His shearer, and He shall not open His mouth" (Is. liii. 7). Behold, in fine, our loving Redeemer, who to save us chose to suffer death and the punishment deserved by us: "Surely He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows" (Is. liii. 4). St. Gregory Nazianzen says, 'He refused not to suffer as guilty, provided only that men might obtain salvation.'[53] Who has done this? asks St. Bernard. What has been the cause of this immense prodigy? A God to die for His creatures! 'Who has done it? Charity has done it.' It has been wrought by the love which God bears to man. The saint pursues his meditation on the time when our amiable Redeemer was seized by the soldiers in the garden of Gethsemani, as is related by St. John: "And they bound Him" (St. John xviii. 12). And then he says to our Lord: 'What hast

Thou to do with chains?' My Lord, he says, I behold Thee bound by this vile rabble as if Thou wert a criminal, and they are about to drag Thee to an unjust death; but, O God, what have cords and chains to do with Thee? such things belong to evil-doers, but not to Thee, who art innocent, who art the Son of God, innocence itself, holiness itself. St. Lawrence Justinian replies, that the bonds which dragged Jesus Christ to death were not those that were fastened on Him by the soldiers, but the love He bore towards men; and hereupon he exclaims: 'O charity, how strong are thy bonds, by which even a God could be bound!' The same St. Bernard goes on to consider the iniquitous sentence of Pilate, who condemned Jesus to the cross, after several times having declared Him innocent; and then, turning himself to Jesus, he thus bewails himself before Him: 'What hast Thou done, O most innocent Saviour, that Thou receivest such a judgment?' Ah, my Lord, I hear this wicked judge condemning Thee to die upon the cross; and what evil hast Thou done? what crime hast Thou ever perpetrated to deserve such a death of torture and shame? a death awarded to none but to the most guilty wretches? But he then resumes by replying: Ah, I now comprehend, O my Jesus, what crime it is of which Thou art guilty; it is of having loved mankind too dearly: 'Thy love is Thy crime.' Yes, it is this love, more than Pilate, that condemns Thee to death; because it is to pay off the penalties due from mankind that Thou hast willed to suffer death. As the time of the Passion of our Blessed Redeemer drew near, He besought His Father that He would hasten to glorify Him, by permitting Him to offer to Him the sacrifice of His life: "Father, glorify Thy Son" (St. John xvii. 1). At this, St. John Chrysostom asks in astonishment: 'What sayest Thou? Dost Thou call these things glory?' A Passion and a death accompanied with such sufferings and shame, dost Thou call this Thy glory? And the saint then replies to his own question for Jesus Christ: 'Yes, since it is for my beloved ones, I esteem it a glory.' Yes, so immense is the love I entertain for mankind, that it makes me consider it my glory to suffer and to die for their sakes.

"Say to the faint-hearted, Take courage, and fear not: behold your God will bring the revenge of recompense; God Himself will come and will save you" (Is. xxxv. 4). Fear not then, says the prophet; be no more in despair, O poor sinners! What fear can you have not to be pardoned, when the Son of God comes down from heaven to save you? Has not He Himself made compensation to God by the sacrifice of His life for that just vengeance which our sins demanded? If you cannot by your own works appease an offended God, behold one that can appease Him; this very infant which you now see reposing on straw, trembling with cold, and weeping, He with His tears propitiates Him. You have no grounds for being any more sad, says St. Leo, on account of the sentence of death fulminated against you, now that life itself is born for you: 'nor is there any lawful room for sadness, when it is the birthday of life.' And St. Augustine: 'O sweet day for penitents, to-day sin is taken away, and shall the sinner despair?' If you are unable to render due satisfaction to the Divine Justice, look on Jesus, who does penance for you; already does He commence to do it in this little cave; He will persevere in doing penance all His life, and finally bring it to a conclusion on the cross, to which (according to the saying of St. Paul) He will affix the decree of your condemnation, cancelling it with His own blood: "Blotting out the hand-writing of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross" (Coloss. ii. 14). The same apostle says, that Jesus Christ, by dying for us, was made our justification: "He is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). 'Justice,' comments St. Bernard, 'in the washing away of sins.' Yes; for God, accepting on our behalf the torments and death of Jesus Christ, is obliged to pardon us in virtue of the compact made: "Him that knew no sin, for us He hath made sin, that we might be made the justice of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). The innocent one was made a victim for our sins, in order that forgiveness through His merits might of right belong to us. For this reason David prays God to save him, not

only for His mercy's sake, but likewise for the sake of His justice : " Deliver me in Thy justice" (Ps. xxx. 1).

The eagerness of God to save sinners was always immense. This eagerness led Him to approach them with that cry : " Return, ye transgressors, to the heart" (Is. xlvi. 8). Sinners, enter once more into your own hearts; think on the benefits you have received from Me, on the love I have borne you, and offend Me no more. Turn ye to Me, and I will turn to you" (Zach. i. 3). Turn back to Me, and I will receive you in my embraces : " Why will you die, O house of Israel ? Return ye and live" (Ezech. xxi. 31). My children, why will you destroy yourselves, and of your own free-will condemn yourselves to everlasting death ? Return to Me, and you shall live. In a word, His infinite mercy induced Him to descend from heaven to earth to come and free us from eternal death : " Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us" (St. Luke i. 78). But here we must be mindful of what St. Paul says : previously to God becoming man He reserved mercy for us; but He could not feel compassion for our miseries, because compassion implies some suffering, and God is incapable of suffering. Now, says the apostle, in order to be moved also with compassion for us the Eternal Word willed to become man, capable of suffering, and similar to other men who are afflicted with compassion, so that He might be able not only to save us, but also to compassionate us : " For we have not a High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin" (Heb. iv. 15). And in another passage : " It behoved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become merciful" (Heb. ii. 17).

Oh, what a tender compassion has Jesus Christ for poor sinners ! This makes Him say, that He is that shepherd who goes about seeking the lost sheep, and on finding it He makes festival saying : " Rejoice with Me, because I have found My sheep that was lost. And He lays it upon His shoulders rejoicing" (St. Luke xv. 6) ; and thus He carefully keeps possession of it in His fond embraces for

fear He should again lose it. This, too, caused Him to say that He is that loving Father who, whenever a prodigal son that has left Him returns to His feet, does not thrust him away, but embraces him, kisses him, and as it were faints away for the consolation and fondness which He feels in beholding his repentance: "And running to him, He fell upon his neck and kissed him" (St. Luke xv. 20). This causes Him to say: "I stand at the gate and knock" (Apoc. iii. 20);—that is, that, although driven away from the soul by sin, He does not abandon her, but He places Himself outside the door of her heart and knocks by His calls to gain re-admittance. This made Him say to His disciples, who with an indiscreet zeal would have called down vengeance on those who repulsed them: "You know not of what spirit you are" (St. Luke ix. 55). You see that I have so much compassion on sinners; and do you desire vengeance on them? Go, go away, for you are not of My spirit. Finally, this compassion made Him say: "Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (St. Matt. xi. 28). Come to Me all you that are afflicted and tormented with the weight of your sins, and I will give you ease. And, in fact, with what tenderness did our amiable Redeemer, the moment she repented, forgive Magdalene, and change her into a saint! With what kindness did He forgive the paralytic, and at the same moment restore him to bodily health! And with what sweet gentleness, above all, did He treat the woman taken in adultery! The priests brought that sinner before Him, that He might condemn her; but Jesus turning towards her said: "Hath no man condemned thee? Neither will I condemn thee" (St. John viii. 10, 11). As if He would thereby say: None of those who conducted thee hither hath condemned thee, and how then shall I condemn thee, I who came to save sinners? 'Go in peace, and sin no more.'

Oh, no, let us not be afraid of Jesus Christ; but let us be afraid of our own obstinacy, if after offending Him we will not listen to His voice, inviting us to be reconciled. "Who is he that shall condemn?" says the apostle: "Christ Jesus that died; who also maketh intercession for

us" (Rom. viii. 34). If we persist in our obstinacy, Jesus Christ will be constrained to condemn us; but if we repent of the evil we have done, what fear need we have of Jesus Christ? Who has to pronounce on us sentence? Think (says St. Paul) that the self-same Redeemer has to sentence thee, who died just that He might not condemn thee; that self-same one who, that He might pardon thee, hath given Himself no pardon: 'In order to redeem the servant, He hath not spared Himself,' says St. Bernard.

Go, then, O sinner, go to the stable of Bethlehem, and thank the Infant Jesus, all shivering with cold for thy sake in that cave, moaning and weeping for thee on a bundle of straw; give thanks to this thy Redeemer, who has come down from heaven to call thee to Himself and to save thee. If thou art desirous of pardon, He is waiting thee in that manger to pardon thee. Go quickly, then, and obtain thy pardon; and afterwards do not forget the excessive love which Jesus Christ has borne thee: "Forget not the kindness of thy surety" (Ecclus. xxix. 19). Forget not (says the Prophet) that high favour He has done thee by making Himself surety for thy debts to God, in taking on Himself the chastisement deserved by thee; do not forget it, and love Him for it. And know further, that shouldst thou love Him, thy past sins will not stand in the way of thy receiving from God those specially great and choice graces which He is wont to bestow on His most beloved souls: "All things work together unto good" (Rom. viii. 28). 'Even sins,' subjoins the Gloss. Yes, even the remembrance of the sins we have committed contributes to the advantage of the sinner who bewails and detests them, because this very thing will concur to make him more humble and more pleasing to God, when he sees how God has welcomed him into the arms of His loving mercies: "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just" (St. Luke xv. 7). But of what sinner is it to be understood that he gives more joy to heaven than a whole multitude of just ones? It is to be understood of that sinner who, out of gratitude to the Divine Goodness, devotes himself wholly and fervently to the love of God, after the example

of a St. Paul, a St. Mary Magdalene, a St. Mary of Egypt, a St. Augustine, and a St. Margaret of Cortona. To this last saint in particular, who had formerly spent several years in sin, God revealed the place prepared for her in heaven, amongst the Seraphim; and even during her life He showed her many signal favours, insomuch that, beholding herself so favoured, she one day said to God: 'O Lord, how is it that you lavish so many graces on me? Have you, then, forgotten the sins I have committed against you?' And God thus answered her: 'And do you not know what I have before told you, that when a soul repents of her faults, I no longer remember all the outrages she has been guilty of towards Me?' This same thing He had long ago announced by His Prophet Ezechiel: "If the wicked do penance . . . . I will not remember all his iniquities" (Ezech. xviii. 21).

Let us conclude. Our sins, then, do not prevent us becoming saints; God offers us readily every assistance if we only desire it and ask it. What more remains? It remains for us to give ourselves entirely to God, and to devote to His love at least the remainder of our days in this life. Come, then, let us bestir ourselves; what are we doing? If we fail, we fail through ourselves, and not through God. Let us never be so unhappy as to turn all these mercies and loving calls of God into subjects of remorse and despair upon our death-beds, at that last moment when no more time is left to do any thing; then the night sets in: "The night cometh, when no man can work" (St. John ix. 4). Let us recommend ourselves to the most holy Mary, who, as St. Germanus says, makes it her glory to turn the most abandoned sinners into saints, by procuring them the grace of conversion, not in an ordinary, but in an extraordinary degree; and this she is well able to do, because what she asks of Jesus Christ she asks as a Mother:[54] 'But thou, powerful with God by thy maternal authority, obtainest a wonderful grace of reconciliation for sinners even who have sinned enormously;' and she herself encourages us in those words put into her mouth by the Holy Church: "With me are riches . . . that I may enrich them that love me" (Prov. viii. 18, 21); and else

where : "In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue" (Ecclus. xxiv. 25). Come to me all, she says, because you shall find with me every hope of saving yourselves, and of saving yourselves as saints.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

O my Redeemer and God! and who am I, that Thou shouldest have loved me, and still continue to love me, so much? What hast Thou ever received from me, that has obliged Thee so to love me? what, except slights and provocations, which were a reason for Thee to abandon me, and to banish me for ever from Thy face? But, O Lord, I accept of every penalty, except this. If Thou dost forsake and deprive me of Thy grace, I can never more love Thee. I have not the pretensions to escape punishment; but I wish to love Thee, and to love Thee exceedingly. I wish to love Thee as a sinner is bound to love Thee, who, after so many special favours, and so many marks of love received from Thee, has, in spite of all, so frequently turned his back upon Thee; who, for the sake of wretched momentary and poisonous satisfactions, has renounced Thy grace and Thy love. Pardon me, O my beloved Infant, for I am sorry with my whole heart for every single displeasure I have given Thee. But know that I shall not be content with a simple pardon; I desire also the grace to love Thee ardently; I wish to make compensation by my love as much as possible for the past ingratitude which I have shown Thee. An innocent soul loves Thee as innocent, and thanks Thee for having preserved her from the death of sin. I must love Thee as a sinner; that is, as one who has rebelled against Thee, as one condemned to hell, as often as I deserved it; and then so often graciously received back by Thee and re-established in the way of salvation, and over and above enriched with lights, with helps, with invitations to become a saint. O Redeemer, and Redeemer again and again of my soul, my soul is now enamoured of Thee, and loves Thee. Thou hast loved me above measure, so that, overcome by Thy love, I could no longer resist its winning appeals, and at last I now sur-

render myself, and fix all my love on Thee. I love Thee, then, O infinite Goodness! I love Thee, O most loveable God! Do Thou never cease to enkindle more and more in my heart the flames and fiery darts of love. For Thy own glory cause Thyself to be greatly loved by one who has greatly offended Thee. Mary, my Mother, you are the hope, the refuge of sinners; assist a sinner who desires to prove faithful to his God; help me to love Him, and to love Him exceedingly.

Discourse V.

THE ETERNAL WORD FROM BEING STRONG HAS BECOME WEAK.

"Say to the faint-hearted: Take courage, and fear not: God Himself will come and will save you." *Is.* xxxv. 4.

Isaias, speaking of the coming of the Redeemer, made this prediction: "The land that was desolate and impassable shall be glad, and the wilderness shall rejoice and shall flourish like the lily" (Is. xxxv. 1). The Prophet had been speaking of the pagans (among whom were our unfortunate ancestors), who were living in heathenship, as in a desert land, void of a single man that knew and worshipped the true God, but peopled only with those who were slaves of the devil: a desert land and impassable, because there was no path of salvation known to these wretched people. And he foretold that the land, though so miserable then, would afterwards rejoice at the coming of the Messias, and would see herself filled with followers of the true God, strengthened by His grace against all the enemies of their salvation; and that she would blossom as the lily, by purity of morals and by the sweet odour of all holy virtues. Wherefore Isaias proceeds to say: "Say to the faint-hearted, Take courage, and fear not: God Himself will come and save you." This very event, foretold by Isaias, has already happened. Let me, then, exclaim with gladness: Go on joyfully, O children of Adam, go on joyfully, be no more faint-hearted. What though you perceive yourselves weak, and unable to stand against so many enemies: 'Fear not; God Himself will come and save you.' God Himself has come on earth, and has redeemed us, by imparting to you

strength sufficient to combat and to vanquish every enemy of your salvation. And how did our Redeemer procure us this strength? From being *strong* and omnipotent, He has become *weak*. He has taken on Himself our weakness, and by so doing has communicated to us His strength. Let us see the truth of this. But let us first seek light of Jesus and Mary.

God is that strong One, who alone can be called strong, because He is strength itself; and whoever is strong, derives strength from Him: "Strength is Mine, and by Me kings reign" (Prov. viii. 14), saith the Lord. God is that Mighty One who can do whatsoever He will; and He can do this with ease; He has merely to wish it: "Behold, Thou hast made heaven and earth by Thy great power, and no word shall be hard to Thee" (Jer. xxxii. 17). By a nod He created heaven and earth out of nothing: "He spoke, and they were made" (Ps. cxlviii. 5). And did He choose it, He could destroy the immense machinery of the universe by a single nod, as He created it: "At a beck He can utterly destroy the whole world" (2 Machab. viii. 18). We know already how, when it pleased Him, He burnt five entire cities with a deluge of fire. We know how, previously to that, He inundated the whole earth with a deluge of waters, to the destruction of all mankind, with the sole exception of eight persons. In five days, says the wise man: "O Lord, who can ever resist the strength of your arm?" (Wisd. xi. 22.) Hence we may see the rashness of the sinner who wrestles against God, and carries his audacity so far as even to lift up his hand against the Almighty: "He hath stretched out his hand against God, and hath strengthened himself against the Almighty" (Job xv. 25). Suppose we should see an ant make an assault upon a soldier, what rashness it would be thought! But how much more rash is it for a man to make an assault on the Creator Himself, who scorns His precepts, disregards His threats, despises His grace, and declares himself His enemy!

But these rash and ungrateful men are the very men whom the Son of God has come to save, by making Himself man, and by taking on Himself the chastisement deserved by them, in order to obtain them pardon. And

then, seeing that man from the wounds inflicted by sin continued very weak and powerless to resist the strength of his enemies, what did He do? From strong and almighty as He was, He became weak, and assumed to Himself the bodily infirmities of man, in order to procure for man by His merits the strength of soul requisite to subdue the attacks of the flesh and of hell. And so, behold Him made a little child, in need of milk to sustain His life, and so feeble that He cannot feed Himself, that He cannot move Himself. The Eternal Word, in coming to be made man, wished to conceal His strength: "God will come from the south; there is His strength hid" (Habac. iii. 3, 4). We find (says St. Augustine) Jesus Christ strong and feeble,—strong, since He created all things; feeble, since we behold Him made man like us: 'We find Jesus strong and weak; strong, by whom all things were made without labour. Would you see Him weak? The Word was made flesh.'[55] Now this Strong One has chosen to become weak, says the Saint, to repair by His weakness our infirmity, and so to obtain our salvation: 'He hath built us up by His strength, He hath sought us by His infirmity.' For this reason He likens Himself to the hen, when He speaks with Jerusalem: "How often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings! and thou wouldst not" (St. Matt. xxiii. 37). St. Augustine remarks, that the hen in rearing her chickens grows weak, and by this mark is known to be a mother; so was it with our loving Redeemer, by becoming infirm and weak, He made Himself known for the father and mother of us poor weak creatures.

Behold Him who governs the heavens (says St. Cyril) swathed in rags, and unable even to stretch forth His little arms. Behold Him in that journey, which by His Father's will He had to make into Egypt; He wished already to obey, but He cannot walk; Mary and Joseph are obliged to take turns in carrying Him in their arms. And in their return from Egypt, as St. Bonaventure contemplates, they have frequently to stop and rest, because the Divine Child was now so much grown, that He was too great to be carried in the arms; whilst, on the other hand, He was too small

and feeble to make a long journey: 'He is so large that He cannot be carried, and so small that He cannot walk alone.'

Look at Him afterwards in the shop at Nazareth, growing towards manhood, how busily He toils and labours in helping Joseph at his trade of carpenter! Who can ever attentively consider Jesus, that beautiful Youth, fatiguing and exhausting Himself to bring into form some rough-hewn piece of wood, and not exclaim: But, most sweet Youth, art Thou not that God who by a mere nod didst create the world out of nothing? and how comes it that Thou hast laboured now for a whole day, and bathed in sweat, to fashion this piece of wood; and even still Thy work remains unfinished? Who has reduced Thee to such a state of weakness? O holy Faith! O divine Love! O God! O God! how such a thought as this, if once well penetrated, would suffice, not only to inflame us, but to reduce us, so to speak, into ashes with the fire of love! Has a God, then, come to such a pass as this? and wherefore? To make Himself loved by men! Observe Him, again, at the close of His life bound with cords in the garden, from which He cannot loose Himself; tied in the pretorium to a pillar to undergo the scourging; see Him with the cross on His shoulders, but too feeble to carry it, and therefore He frequently falls upon the road; see Him fixed to the cross with nails, from which He can find no escape; behold Him finally, how, for very exhaustion and weakness, He is already in His agony, draws near His end, and expires.

And for what reason did Jesus Christ become so weak? He made Himself weak, as we said above, that so He might communicate His strength to us, and by this means conquer and subdue the powers of hell: "The lion of the tribe of Juda hath prevailed" (Apoc. v. 5). David says, that the will to save us and to free us from death, is a part and property of God's Divine nature. Our God is the God of salvation: "and of the Lord, of the Lord are the issues from death" (Ps. lxvii. 21). On which passage Bellarmine makes this commentary: 'This is proper to Him, this is His very nature; our God is a saving God; and of our God are the issues of death, that is, the delivery from death.' Are we indeed weak? let us put our trust in Jesus

Christ, and we shall be capable of all things: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil. iv. 13), said the apostle. I am able for all things, not by my own strength, but by the strength which my Redeemer has obtained for me through His merits: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world" (St. John xvi. 33). Take courage, my children, Jesus Christ says to us; if you are unable to resist your enemies, "I have overcome the world;" and know that I have overcome it for you; my conquest was to give you the spoils; avail yourselves now of the arms which I leave you to defend yourselves, for you are sure to triumph. What are the arms which Jesus Christ has left us? They are two, the use of the sacraments and prayer. Every body knows that by means of the sacraments, especially of penance and the holy Eucharist, are imparted to us the graces which our Saviour has merited for us; and experience shows us every day that those who frequent the sacraments easily keep themselves in the grace of God. And, especially, how is he that often communicates strengthened in a wonderful manner to vanquish temptations! The holy Eucharist is called bread, the heavenly bread, that we may understand how the Communion preserves the life of the soul, which is Divine grace, just as earthly bread preserves the life of the body. For the same reason the Council of Trent calls Holy Communion a remedy which relieves us from venial and preserves us from mortal sins: 'An antidote by which we are freed from daily faults, and are preserved from mortal sins.'[56] St. Thomas, speaking of the holy Eucharist, says, that the wound left by sin would remain incurable, were it not for this remedy which is given to us: 'It would be incurable, were it not the medicine of God applied to cure us.'[57] Moreover, Innocent III. said, that the Passion of Jesus Christ delivers us from the chains of sin, and the Holy Communion delivers us from the will to sin: 'The mystery of the Cross delivers us from the power of sin; the mystery of the Eucharist from the will to sin.'[58]

The other grand means of overcoming temptations is prayer offered to God through the merits of Jesus Christ: "Amen, Amen, I say to you (said our Redeemer), if you

ask the Father any thing in My name, He will give it you" (St. John xvi. 23). Whatsoever, then, we seek of God in the name of Jesus Christ, that is, through His merits, we shall certainly obtain it. And it is what we see happen continually; all those who are tempted and have recourse to God, and invoke Him through Jesus Christ, invariably come off victorious; and on the contrary, those who in temptations (especially of impurity) neglect to recommend themselves to God, fall miserably and perish. And then they excuse themselves by saying they are but of flesh, and are very weak. But how can they reasonably allege their weakness as an excuse, when they are able to acquire strength by having recourse to Jesus Christ (for it is enough to call with confidence on His Most Holy Name), and they will not do it? What excuse, I say, would that man have for having been vanquished by his enemy, who, when the requisite arms for his defence were presented him, had despised and refused them? Were such a man to allege his weakness, who would not instantly condemn him with these words,—And you, knowing as you did your own weakness, why did you not avail yourself of the arms that were offered you? St. Augustine says, that the devil was put in chains by Jesus Christ; he can bark, but he cannot bite any one, except those who wish to be bitten. That man is really a fool (continues the Saint) who allows himself to be bitten by a dog chained up:* 'Christ came and chained the devil. He is bound in chains like a dog. Foolish is the man whom a dog in chains bites. He can bark, he can make attempts; he can only bite him who wills it; for he does not extort our consent from us, but seeks it.'[59] And in another passage he says that the Redeemer has given us every remedy to effect our cure; he that will not observe the laws and is put to death, dies because he wishes his own death. 'As far as the physician is concerned, he came to heal; he destroys himself who will not observe the laws.' He that takes advantage of Jesus Christ is not weak; no, but he waxes strong on the strength of Jesus Christ. Jesus it is who, as St. Augustine says, not only cheers us on to the combat, but affords us help; if we fail, He is ready to succour us; and of His immense good-

ness He Himself crowns us in the end: 'He encourages you to fight, and helps you to conquer, and supports you if you languish, and crowns you victorious.'[60] Isaias prophesied: "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart;" that is, by the merits of the Redeemer, he who could not stir one step should skip over the hills as a swift hart: "And that which was dry land shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water;" he foretells that the most parched-up soil should teem with virtues: "In the dens where dragons dwelt before shall rise up the verdure of the reed and the bulrush" (Is. xxxv. 7); and that in those souls in which devils formerly abode should be propagated the vigour of the reed,—namely, of humility, because, according to the commentary of Cornelius à Lapide, 'the humble man is empty in his own eyes;' and of the bulrush,—namely, of charity, because, as the same commentator says, in certain localities they use it for wicks to burn in lamps. In a word, we find in Jesus Christ all grace, all strength, all help, whenever we have recourse to Him: "In all things you are made rich in Him, so that nothing is wanting to you in any grace" (1 Cor. i. 5, 7). For this very end He was made man, and emptied Himself: 'He emptied Himself.' 'He, as it were, reduced Himself to nothing,' says a certain author; 'He made Himself empty of majesty, of glory, of strength.' In a manner, He lowered Himself to nothing; He put off His majesty, glory, and power, and took on Himself ignominies and infirmities, to make over to us His worth and His virtues, that so He might be our light, our justice, our satisfaction, and our ransom: "Who is made unto us wisdom, and justice, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. i. 30). And He remains ready at any moment to give health and strength to every one that asks it of Him.

"I saw one girt about the paps with a golden girdle" (Apoc. i. 13). St. John saw the Lord with His breasts full of milk (that is, full of graces), and bound about with a girdle of gold; this signifies that Jesus Christ is, as it were, hemmed round and compressed with the love He bears to man; and as the mother, whose breast is over-supplied with milk, seeks for children who may imbibe the

nourishment and relieve her of the burden, so does He yearn for us to come and seek graces of Him, and the necessary help to conquer our enemies, who strive to rob us of His friendship and of eternal salvation. O, how bounteous and liberal is God with a soul that sincerely and resolutely seeks Him! "The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh Him" (Lamen. iii. 25). Wherefore, if we do not become saints, the failure rests with us, because we do not resolve to wish for God alone: "The sluggard willeth and willeth not" (Prov. xiii. 4). The lukewarm will and will not; and therefore they remain defeated, because they want the resolute will to please God alone. A resolute will overcomes every thing; for when once a soul determines really to give herself wholly to God, God immediately gives her the hand, and the strength to surmount all difficulties that may occur in the way of perfection. This was the splendid promise which Isaias signified to us in these words: "O, that Thou wouldest rend the heavens and wouldest come down: the mountains would melt away at Thy presence. The crooked shall become straight, and the rough ways plain" (Is. xl. 4). At the coming of the Redeemer He shall endow our souls with such a strength of goodwill, that they shall find levelled down the mountains of all the carnal appetites; and they shall find the crooked ways made straight and the rough ways plain; that is, the contempts and labours which formerly were so difficult and hard for men to bear, shall, by means of the grace given by Jesus Christ, and of the Divine love which He shall enkindle in their hearts, be afterwards all made sweet and easy. Thus was it that a St. John of God rejoiced at being beaten as a fool in an hospital; thus a St. Lidwine was glad to find herself during so many years tied down to her bed by a body full of wounds and sores; thus a St. Lawrence exulted and mocked the tyrant, while scorching on a gridiron, and giving his life for Jesus Christ. And so likewise do so many souls enamoured of God find peace and contentment, not, indeed, in the pleasures and honours of the world, but in sufferings and insults.

Ah! let us beg Jesus Christ to impart to us that fire which He came on earth to enkindle; that so we may no

longer find it difficult to despise goods of dirt, and to undertake great things for God. 'He that loves, labours not,' says St. Augustine; the soul that loves God alone finds it neither irksome nor painful to suffer, to pray, to mortify herself, to humble herself, and to detach herself from the pleasures of earth. The more she works and suffers, the more she is eager to do and to suffer: "Jealousy is hard as hell; the lamps thereof are fire and flames" (Cant. viii. 6). The flames of Divine love are like the flames of hell, which never say it is enough. Nothing whatever satisfies a soul that loves God. As for hell no fire is sufficient, so for the loving soul, her ardour is never satisfied.

Let us ask this great gift through the intercession of Mary, by whose hands (as was revealed to St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi) Divine love is bestowed upon souls. She is God's treasure, the treasurer of all graces (especially of Divine love), as she was called by the Idiota, 'The treasure and the treasurer of graces.'

COLLOQUY.

My sovereign God and Redeemer, I was lost; Thou hast ransomed me from hell. But, unhappy me! I have often afterwards lost myself anew, and Thou hast as often released me from eternal death: 'I am Thine, save me.' Since, as I hope, I am now Thine, suffer me never more to cast myself away by rebelling against Thee; I am resolved to suffer death, and a thousand deaths, rather than see myself ever again Thy enemy and the slave of the devil. But Thou knowest my weakness, Thou knowest my past treacheries. Thou must give me strength to resist the assaults which hell will make upon me. I know that I shall be assisted by Thee in temptation whenever I shall have recourse to Thee, since I have Thy promise for it: "Ask, and you shall receive. Every one that asketh receiveth." But my fear is, lest in the moment of trial I should fail to recommend myself to Thee, and so be miserably overcome. This, therefore, is the grace which I most earnestly implore of Thee: grant me light and strength on all occasions to

have recourse to Thee, and to invoke Thee whenever I am tempted; and, moreover, I entreat Thee to grant me Thy help, that I may always ask Thee for this grace. Grant it me by the merits of Thy Precious Blood. And you, O Mary, obtain it for me by the love which you bear to Jesus Christ.

Discourse VI.

THE ETERNAL WORD FROM BEING HIS OWN HAS MADE HIMSELF OURS.

"A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us." *Is.* xi. 6.

Tell me, cruel Herod, why dost thou command so many innocent babies to be murdered and sacrificed to thy ambition of reigning? Art thou perchance afraid that the Messias lately born may rob thee of thy kingdom? 'Why art thou so troubled, Herod?' asks St. Fulgentius. 'This King who is born came not to vanquish kings by fighting, but to subdue them by dying.'[61] This King, of whom thou art in such terror, is not come to conquer the monarchs of the earth by force of arms, but He is come to reign in the hearts of men by suffering and dying for their love. 'He came, therefore' (concludes St. Fulgentius), 'not that He might combat alive, but that He might triumph slain.' Our amiable Redeemer did not come to carry on war during His life, but to triumph over the love of men, when He should have laid down His life on the gibbet of the cross, as He Himself said: "When I shall be lifted up, I will draw all things to Myself" (St. John xii. 32). But let us leave Herod aside, O devout souls, and let us come to ourselves. Why, then, did the Son of God come upon earth? was it to give Himself to us? Yes, Isaias assures us of it: "A Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us." The love which this loving Saviour bears us, and the desire which He has to be loved by us, has induced Him to do this. Being His own He has become ours. Let us see it; but let us first ask light from the Most Holy Sacrament and from the Divine Mother.

The greatest privilege of God, nay, the whole of God, is

to be His own, that is, to exist of Himself, and to depend on no one. All creatures, however grand and excellent they may be, are nothing in reality, because whatsoever they have, they have from God, Who has created them and preserves them ; and this in such a manner, that if God were for a single moment to cease from preserving them, they would instantly lose their being and return to nothing. God, on the contrary, because He exists of Himself, cannot fail ; nor can there be any one to destroy Him, or to diminish His greatness, His power, or His happiness. But St. Paul says, that the Eternal Father has given the Son to us : "He delivered Him up for us all" (Rom. viii. 32). And that the Son has given Himself for us : "Christ also hath loved us and hath delivered Himself for us" (Ephes. v. 2). Has God, then, in giving Himself for us, made Himself ours ? Yes, replies St. Bernard : 'He is born, who belonged to Himself ;' He who wholly appertained to Himself, chose to be born for us and to become ours ; love triumphs over God. This God, over whom none besides can rule, has, so to speak, yielded Himself captive to love ; love has gained the victory over Him, and from being His own has reduced Him into our possession : "God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son" (St. John iii. 16). God has so loved men, says Jesus Christ, that He has even given them His only-begotten Son. And the Son Himself, also through love, was pleased to give Himself to men to be loved by them.

In divers ways God had already strove to win the hearts of men, at one time with benefits, at another with threats, and again with promises ; but He had still fallen short of His aim. His infinite love, says St. Augustine, made Him devise the plan of giving Himself entirely to us by the Incarnation of the Word, in order thus to oblige us to love Him with our whole hearts. 'Then love found out the plan of delivering up itself.'[62] He could have sent an angel, a seraph, to redeem man ; but aware that man, had he been redeemed by a seraph, would have had to divide his heart, by partly loving His Creator, and partly His Redeemer, God, who would possess the entire heart and the entire love of man, 'wished therefore to be' (says a pious

author) 'both our Creator and Redeemer;' as He was our Creator, so He would likewise become our Redeemer.

And behold Him already arrived from heaven in a stable; as a child, born for us and given to us: "a Child is born to us, and a Son is given to us." This was precisely what the angel signified when addressing the shepherds: "To-day is born to you a Saviour" (St. Luke ii. 11). As much as to say: O ye men, go to the cave of Bethlehem, there adore the Infant, which you will find laid on the straw, in a manger, and shivering with cold; know that He is your God, who would not consent to send any one else to save you, but would come Himself, that He might gain for Himself all your love. Yes, it was with the purpose of making Himself loved that the Eternal Word came upon earth to converse among men: "He conversed with men" (Bar. iii. 38) If a king speaks a confidential word to one of his vassals, if he smiles upon him, or presents him with a flower, oh, how honoured and happy does that vassal consider himself! How much more so, should the king seek his friendship; should he request his company every day at table; should he desire him to take up his residence in his own palace, and to abide always near him! Ah! my Great King, my beloved Jesus, as before the Redemption Thou couldest not assume man into heaven, whose gates remained closed by sin, Thou camest down upon earth to converse with men as their brothers, and to give Thyself wholly to them, from the excess of the love Thou bearest them! "He loved us and delivered Himself up for us." Yes, exclaims St. Augustine, this most loving and most merciful God, through His love to man, chose to give him not only His goods, but even His very Self. 'The most merciful God, through His love of man, poured out upon him not only His goods, but His whole self.' Well, then, the affection which this sovereign Lord entertains towards us miserable worms is so immense, that it induced Him to give Himself wholly to us, being born for us, living for us, and even offering up His life and all His blood for us, in order to prepare us a bath of salvation, and to wash us from all our sins: "He hath loved us and washed us in His own blood" (Apoc.

i. 5). But, Lord (remonstrates the Abbot Guerric), this appears an extreme prodigality of Thyself, coming from the great anxiety Thou hast to be loved by mankind. 'O God! if we may dare say so, prodigal of Himself through desire of man!' 'And is it not so?' he continues: 'how otherwise can we style this God than prodigal of Himself, Who, in order to recover lost man, not only gives whatever He has, but even His own self?'

St. Augustine says, that God, in order to captivate the love of men, has cast several darts of love into their hearts: 'God knows how to take aim at love; He draws the arrow that He may make a lover.'[63] What are these arrows? They are all the creatures that we see around us; for God has created them all for man, that man might love Him; hence the same Saint says: 'Heaven and earth and all things tell me to love Thee.' It seemed to the Saint, that the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the plains, the seas, and the rivers spoke to Him and said: Augustine, love God, because God has created us for thee, that thou mightest love Him. When St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi held in her hand a beautiful fruit or flower, she declared that that fruit or flower was as a dart to her heart, which wounded her with the love of God; thinking as she did how from all eternity God had designed to create that flower that she might discover His love, and love Him in return. St. Teresa moreover said, that all the fair things which we see,—the lakes, the rivers, the flowers, the fruits, the birds,—all upbraid us with our ingratitude to God, for all are tokens of the love God bears us. It is related likewise of a pious hermit, that, walking in the country, and beholding the herbs and the flowers, he fancied they reproached him with his ingratitude; so that, as he went along, he struck them gently with his staff, saying to them: Hush, be silent, I understand you, no more! you upbraid me with my ingratitude, because God has created you in such beauty for my sake, that I might love Him, and I love Him not; oh, be silent, I hear you, enough, enough! And thus the good man pursued his way, giving vent to the ardours of love, which he felt consuming his heart for God at the sight of those fair creatures.

Thus, then, all these creatures were so many darts of love to the heart of man; but God was not satisfied with these darts only; they were not enough to gain Him the love of men: "He hath made me as a chosen arrow; in His quiver He hath hidden me" (Is. xlix. 2). On this passage Cardinal Hugo remarks, that as the sportsman keeps in reserve the best arrow for the last shot, in order to secure his prey; so did God among all His gifts keep Jesus in reserve till the fulness of time should come, and then He sent Him as a last dart to wound with love the hearts of men: 'The choicest arrow is reserved; so Christ was reserved in the bosom of the Father, until the fulness of time should come, and He was sent to wound the hearts of the faithful.' Jesus, then, was the choice and reserved arrow, at the discharge of which, according as David had long ago foretold, entire nations should fall vanquished: "Thy arrows are sharp; under Thee shall people fall" (Ps. xliv. 6). Oh, how many stricken hearts do I behold burning with love before the manger of Bethlehem! how many at the foot of the cross in Calvary! how many before the Holy Presence of the Blessed Sacrament on our altars!

St. Peter Chrysologus says, that our Redeemer took many various forms to attract the love of man: 'For our sakes He showed Himself under different forms, who remains in the one form of His majesty.'[64] That God, who is unchangeable, would appear now as a child in a stable, now as a boy in a workshop, now as a criminal on a scaffold, and now as bread upon the altar. In these varying guises Jesus chose to exhibit Himself to us; but whatever character He assumed, it was always the character of a lover. Ah, my Lord, tell me, is there any thing else left for Thee to devise in order to make Thyself loved? "Make known His inventions," cried out Isaias (xii 4). Go, O redeemed souls, said the prophet, go and publish every where the loving devices of this loving God, which He has thought out and executed to make Himself loved by man; for after lavishing so many of His gifts upon them, He was pleased to bestow Himself, and to bestow Himself in so many ways: 'If thou desirest a cure for thy wound' (says St. Ambrose), 'He is a Physician;' if thou art infirm, and wouldest be

healed, behold Jesus, who heals thee by His Blood: 'If thou be parched up with fever, He is a fountain;' if the impure flames of worldly affections trouble thee, behold the fountain to refresh thee with His consolations: 'Dost thou fear death, He is life; dost thou long for heaven, He is the way;' in fine, if thou dost not wish to die, He is the life; if thou wishest heaven, He is the way.[65]

And not only has Jesus Christ given Himself to all men in general, but He wished moreover to give Himself to each one in particular. This was what caused St. Paul to say: "He loved me, and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). St. John Chrysostom says, that God has the same love for each one of us, as He has for all men together.[66] So that, my dear brother, if there had been no others in the world besides yourself, the Redeemer would have come for the sake of you alone, and would have given His Blood and His Life for you. And who can ever express or conceive (says St. Lawrence Justinian) the love which God bears to each man? 'Nor is it possible to express with what affection God is moved towards each one.' This led St. Bernard to say also, in speaking of Jesus Christ: 'Given wholly to me, and spent wholly for my interests.'[67] This caused St. John Chrysostom also to say: 'He gave Himself entirely to us, He reserved nothing for Himself.' He gave us His Blood, His Life, Himself in the Blessed Sacrament; there remains nothing more to give us. In fine, says St. Thomas, after God has bestowed Himself on us, what else remains for Him to give us? 'God had no room to extend Himself further.'[68] Wherefore after the work of the redemption, God has nothing more to give us, nothing more that He can do for the love of man.

So that every man should say with St. Bernard: 'I owe myself for myself; what can I return the Lord for Himself?' I belong to God, and to God I must give back myself, for having created me and given me my being; but after I have given myself, what return shall I make to God for having given Himself to me? We have, however, no need to disturb ourselves any longer; it is enough if we give our love to God, and God is satisfied. The kings of the earth glory in the possession of kingdoms and

of wealth, Jesus Christ rests content with the sovereignty of our hearts; this He considers His principality, and this principality He sought to obtain by dying on the cross: "And the government is upon His shoulder." By these words, 'the government is upon His shoulder,' several interpreters, with St. Basil, St. Cyril, St. Augustine, and others, understand the cross which our Redeemer carried on His shoulders. This heavenly King, says Cornelius à Lapide, is a very different master from the devil: the devil burdens the backs of his subjects with heavy loads; Jesus, on the contrary, takes on His own shoulders the burdens of His kingdom, embracing the cross, on which He will die, in order to gain the mastery of our hearts: 'The devil lays burdens on the shoulders of his subjects, Christ will bear the weight of His government on His shoulders; for He will carry the sceptre of His kingdom, that is the cross, on His own shoulders, and will reign from the tree.'[69] It is the remark of Tertullian, that while earthly monarchs bear the sceptre and crown as symbols of royalty, Jesus Christ bore the Cross, which was the throne which He mounted to rule over our love: 'Every king bears the symbol of his power on his shoulder, and a diadem on his head, or a sceptre in his hand. The King Jesus Christ alone bore His power on His shoulder, namely, the cross, that from it He might rule.'

Hence, Origen says, if it be that Jesus Christ has given Himself to each one, what great thing will a man do if he give himself wholly to Jesus Christ? 'If Christ gave Himself, will man do much in giving himself to God, who was the first to give Himself to man?'[70] Let us, then, with a good will give our heart and our love to this God, who, in order to gain it, has had to give His blood, His life, and His whole self: "If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink" (St. John iv. 10). Oh, if thou didst but know (said Jesus to the Samaritan woman) the grace which thou receivest from God, and who it is that asks of thee to drink! Oh, did the soul but understand what a favour it is when God requests us to love Him in those words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." Should a subject hear his prince command him to

love him, the bare mention of such a request would be enough to captivate him. And does not a God captivate us when He requires our heart? saying: "My son, give Me thy heart" (Prov. xxiii. 26).

But this heart He will not have divided, He will have it whole and entire; He wishes us to love Him with our whole heart: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart," otherwise He is not content. For this end He has given us all His blood, His whole life, His whole self, in order that we may give our entire selves to Him, and be wholly His. And let us understand that then we shall give our whole heart to God when we shall give Him our will entirely, not wishing any thing henceforward but what God wishes,—and He certainly only wishes our welfare and our happiness: "To this end Christ died and rose again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. Therefore whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. xiv. 8). Jesus was pleased to die for us; more than this He could not have done to win all our love, and to be the sole Lord of our heart: so that from this day forward we are bound to make known to heaven and to earth, in life and in death, that we are no longer our own, but that we belong solely and entirely to God.

Oh, how God longs to see, and how dearly He loves a heart that is wholly His! Oh, what delicate and loving caresses does God show, what good things, what delights, what glory does God prepare in Paradise for a heart that is wholly His! The venerable Father John Leonard of Lettera, a Dominican, one day beheld Jesus Christ in the appearance of a hunter, and traversing the forest of this earth with an arrow in His hand. The servant of God asked Him what He was thus engaged about. Jesus replied, that He was hunting after hearts. Who knows, I say, whether in this Novena the Infant Redeemer will have the success to hit and to make a prize of some hearts which He has been hunting after for a long time, and hitherto has been unable to wound and to capture! Devout souls, if Jesus gain us, we shall also gain Jesus. The advantage of such an exchange is all on our side. 'Teresa' (said the Lord one day

to this Saint), 'up to this time you have not been all mine; now that you are all mine, be assured that I am all yours.' St. Augustine calls love 'a bond which binds the lover with the loved one.' God has every wish to clasp us and unite us to Himself; but it is also necessary for us to strive and unite ourselves to God. If we wish God to give Himself entirely to us, it is likewise necessary for us to give ourselves entirely to Him.

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

Oh, happy me, if, from this day forward, I shall be able always to say with the sacred spouse, "My Beloved to me, and I to Him" (Cant. ii. 16). My God, my Beloved has given Himself all to me; it is but reasonable for me to give myself all to my God, and to say, "What have I in heaven? and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?" (Ps. lxxii. 25.)

Oh, my beloved Infant, my dear Redeemer, since Thou hast come down from heaven to give Thyself to me, what else shall I go about seeking in heaven or on earth besides Thee, who art my sovereign Good, my only Treasure, the Paradise of souls? Be Thou, then, the sole Lord of my heart, do Thou possess it wholly. May my heart obey Thee alone, and seek to please Thee alone! May my soul love Thee alone, and mayest Thou alone be her portion! Let others strive after and enjoy (if enjoyment can ever be found out of Thee) the goods and fortunes of this world; Thee alone do I desire, who art my fortune, my riches, my peace, my hope in this life and in eternity. Behold, then, my heart; I give it wholly to Thee; it is no longer mine own, but Thine. In the same manner as at Thy entrance into the world Thou didst offer to the Eternal Father, and present to Him Thine entire will, as David has taught: "In the head of the book it is written of Me, that I should do Thy will; O my God, I have desired it" (Ps. xxxix. 8, 9); so do I on this day offer to Thee, my Saviour, my entire will. At one time it was rebellious against Thee, and with it I offended Thee; but for all the wicked consents by which I have miserably forfeited Thy friendship I am now heartily sorry, and I consecrate my

entire will to Thee. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" tell me what Thou desirest of me, for I am willing to do all. Dispose of me and of my affairs as Thou wilt, for I accept of all, and in every thing I resign myself to Thee. I know well that Thou willest what is best for me, and therefore I abandon my soul fully into Thy hands: "Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." For pity's sake, help it and preserve it! and grant that it may be always and entirely Thine own, since Thou hast redeemed it with the last drop of Thy blood: "Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth."

O happy you, most holy Virgin Mary! you were wholly and always God's own,—all fair, all pure, and without spot: "Thou art all beautiful, and there is no stain in thee." You alone, among all souls, were styled by your Spouse His dove, His perfect one: "One is my dove, my perfect one." You are the garden closed against every imperfection and fault, and all laden with the flowers and fruits of virtue. Ah, my Queen and my Mother, you who are so lovely in the eyes of your God, take pity on my soul, which has become so deformed by sin. But if for the past I have not belonged to God, now I wish to be His, and His entirely. I wish to spend the remainder of my life solely in loving my Redeemer, who has loved me so much; suffice it to say, who has given His entire self to me. O my Hope, procure me strength to be grateful and faithful to Him till death! Amen. This is my hope, so may it be!

Discourse VII.

THE ETERNAL WORD FROM BEING HAPPY MADE HIMSELF AFFLICTED.

"And thy eyes shall see thy teacher." *Is.* xxx. 20.

St. John says: "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 St. John ii. 16). Behold the three sinful loves which held dominion over man after the sin of Adam,—the love of pleasures, the love of riches, the love of honours, which generate human pride. The Divine Word, to teach us, by His example, the mortification of the

senses, by which the love of pleasures is subdued, from being happy became afflicted; to teach us detachment from the goods of this earth, from rich He became poor; and, finally, to teach us humility, which overcomes the love of honours, from being exalted He became humble. We will speak on these three points during these three last days of the Novena; to-day let us speak of the first. Our Redeemer came, then, to teach us the love of the mortification of the senses more by the example of His life than by the doctrines which He preached; and, therefore, from happy, as He is and had always been from all eternity, He became afflicted. Let us see it, and let us ask light of Jesus and Mary.

The apostle, speaking of the Divine Beatitude, calls God the only One happy and powerful: "The blessed and only mighty" (1 Tim. vi. 15). And with reason, because all the happiness which can be enjoyed by us His creatures is nothing more than the smallest participation of the infinite happiness of God. The blessed in heaven find therein their happiness, that is, in entering into the immense ocean of the happiness of God: "Enter Thou into the joy of thy Lord." This is the paradise which God bestows on the soul, at the moment when she enters into possession of His eternal kingdom.

God, in creating man at the beginning, did not place him on earth to suffer, but put him into "the paradise of pleasure" (Gen. ii. 15). He put him in a place of delight, in order that he might pass thence to heaven, where he should enjoy for all eternity the glory of the blessed. But by sin unhappy man made himself unworthy of the earthly, and closed against himself the gates of the heavenly paradise, wilfully condemning himself to death and to everlasting misery. But the Son of God, in order to rescue man from such a state of ruin, what did He do? From blessed and most happy as He was, He chose to become afflicted and tormented. Our Redeemer could, indeed, have rescued us from the hands of our enemies without suffering. He could have come on earth and continued in His happiness, leading here below a pleasant life, receiving the honour justly due to Him as King and Lord of all. It was

enough, as far as regarded the redemption, that He should have offered to God one drop of blood, one single tear, to redeem the world and an infinity of worlds : 'The least degree of the suffering of Christ' (says the angelic Doctor) 'would have sufficed for redemption, on account of the infinite dignity of His Person.'[71] But no : "Having joy set before Him, He endured the Cross" (Heb. xii. 2). He renounced all honours and pleasures, and made choice on earth of a life all full of toils and ignominies. Yes, says St. John Chrysostom, any action whatever of the Incarnate Word sufficed for redemption ; but it did not suffice for the love which He bore to man. 'What was sufficient for redemption was not sufficient for love.' And whereas he that loves desires to see himself loved in return, Jesus Christ, in order to be loved by man, was pleased to suffer exceedingly, and to choose for Himself a life of continual suffering, to put man under an obligation of loving Him. Our Lord revealed to St. Margaret of Cortona, that in His whole life He never experienced the smallest degree of sensible consolation : "Great as the sea is Thy destruction" (Lamen. ii. 13). The life of Jesus Christ was bitter as the sea, which is thoroughly bitter and salt, and contains not one drop of water that is sweet. And therefore Isaias justly calls Jesus Christ "a Man of sorrows" (Is. liii. 3) ; as though He had been capable on this earth of nothing but anguish and sorrows. St. Thomas says, that the Redeemer did not simply take on Himself sorrows, but that 'He endured sorrow in its highest degree ;' whereby He would signify that He chose to be the most afflicted man that had ever been upon earth, or should ever be hereafter.

Yes, because this Man was born on purpose to suffer, therefore He assumed a body particularly adapted for suffering. On entering the womb of Mary, as the apostle tells us, He said to His Eternal Father, when He cometh into the world He saith : "Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not ; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me" (Heb. x. 5). My Father, Thou hast rejected the sacrifices of men, because they were not able to satisfy Thy Divine justice for the offences committed against Thee : Thou hast given me a body, as I requested of Thee ; a body delicate,

sensitive, and made purposely for suffering; I gladly accept of this body, and I offer it to Thee; because by enduring in this body all the pains which shall accompany Me through My life, and shall finally cause My death upon the cross, I purpose to propitiate Thee towards the human race, and thus to gain for Myself the love of mankind.

And behold Him scarcely entered into the world, when He already begins His sacrifice by beginning to suffer; but in a manner far different to that in which men suffer. Other children, while remaining in the womb of their mothers, do not suffer, because they are only in their natural place; and if they do suffer in some slight degree, at least they are unconscious of what they feel, since they are deprived of understanding; but Jesus, while an infant, endures for nine months the darkness of that prison, endures the pain of not being able to move, and is perfectly alive to what He endures. It is for this reason that Jeremias said: "A woman shall compass a man" (Jer. xxxi. 22). He foretold that a woman. which was Mary, should bear enclosed in her womb, not a child indeed, but a man; a child truly, as to age; but a perfect man as to the use of reason, since Jesus Christ was full of wisdom from the first instant of His life: "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Coloss. ii. 3). Whence St. Bernard said: 'Jesus was a man while not as yet born, but in wisdom, not in age.'[72] And St. Augustine: 'The unspeakably Wise was in His wisdom a speechless Infant.'[73] He comes forth, then, from the prison of His Mother's womb, but for what? is it perhaps to enjoy Himself? He comes forth to fresh suffering, for He chooses to be born in the depth of winter, in a cavern, where beasts find stabling, and at the hour of midnight; and He is born in such poverty, that He has no fire to warm Him, nor clothes enough to screen Him from the cold. 'A grand pulpit is that manger,' says St. Thomas of Villanova. Oh, how well does Jesus teach us the love of suffering in the grot of Bethlehem! 'In the stable' (adds Salmeron) 'all is vile to the sight, unpleasant to the hearing, offensive to the smell, hard and revolting to the touch.' Every thing in the stable is painful; every thing is painful to the sight, for one sees

nothing but rugged and dark rocks; every thing is painful to the hearing, for He hears only the cries of brute beasts; every thing is painful to the smell, from the stench of the litter that is scattered around; and every thing is painful to the touch, for His cradle is only a narrow manger, and His bed only a handful of straw. Look on this Infant God, how He lies bound up in swaddling-clothes, so that He cannot stir: 'God endures,' said St. Zeno, 'to be bound in swaddling-clothes, because He had come to pay the debts of the whole world.'[74] And hereupon St. Augustine remarks: 'O blessed rags, with which we wipe away the filth of sins!'[75] Observe Him, how He trembles with cold; how He weeps, to let us know that He suffers, and offers to the Eternal Father those first tears to release us from that endless wailing which we had deserved! 'Blessed tears,' says St. Thomas of Villanova, 'which blot out our iniquities!' Oh, tears for us most blessed, since they obtain for us the pardon of our sins!

And thus did the life of Jesus Christ continue always in affliction and sorrow. But a short time after He was born He was obliged to fly as an exile, and wander into Egypt to escape out of the hands of Herod. Then, in that barbarous country He passed many years of His childhood poor and unknown. Nor was the life which He led on His return from Egypt, dwelling at Nazareth, very different up to the time when He received death from the hands of the executioner on the cross in a sea of sorrows and infamy. But, besides, we must also well understand here, that the pains which Jesus Christ endured in His Passion, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the crucifixion, His agony, death, and all the other torments and ignominies which He suffered at the end of His life, He also suffered at the beginning; because from the beginning He had always before His eyes the sad scene of all the torments which He would have to suffer when about to leave this earth, as He predicted by the mouth of David: "My sorrow is continually before Me." We hide from the sick man the knife or the fire with which he is to be cut or cauterised in order to regain his health; but Jesus would not have the instruments of His Passion, by which He was to lose His life,

that He might gain for us eternal life, hidden from His sight; He desired always to have before His eyes the scourge, the thorns, the nails, the cross, which were to drain all the blood from His veins, till He died of pure grief, deprived of all consolation. One day Jesus Christ appeared to Sister Magdalene Orsini, who had been suffering a heavy affliction for a long time, under the form of a crucifix, to comfort her by the remembrance of His Passion, and to animate her to bear her cross with patience. She said to Him: 'But Thou, my Lord, wast only three hours on the cross, while I have suffered this pain for many years.' Then our Lord from the cross replied: 'Ignorant creature that thou art! from the first moment that I was in the womb of Mary I suffered all that I had afterwards to suffer in my death.' 'Christ,' says Novarinus, 'even in the womb of His mother, had the impression of the cross on His mind; so that no sooner was He born than He might be said to have the principality on His shoulders.' So, then, my Redeemer, throughout Thy whole life I shall find Thee nowhere but on the cross: 'Lord, I find Thee nowhere but on the cross,' said Dragone Ostiense. Yes, for the cross on which Jesus Christ died was ever in His mind to torment Him. Even whilst sleeping, says Bellarmine, the sight of the cross was present to the heart of Jesus: 'Christ had His cross always before His eyes. When He slept, His heart watched; nor was it ever free from the sight of the cross.'

But it was not so much the sorrows of His Passion which saddened and embittered the life of our Redeemer, as the sight of all the sins which men would commit after His death. These were the cruel executioners which made Him live in continual agony, oppressed by such an overwhelming grief, that pain alone would have been enough to make Him die of pure sorrow. Father Lessius says that the sight alone of the ingratitude of mankind would have been sufficient to make Jesus Christ die of grief a thousand times. The scourges, the cross, death itself, were not hateful objects to Him, but most dear, chosen, and desired by Himself. He had offered Himself spontaneously to suffer them: "He was offered because it was His own will." He

did not give His life against His will, but by His own election, as He tells us by St. John: "I lay down My life for My sheep" (ch. x. 15). This was indeed the chief desire of His whole life, that the time of His Passion should arrive, that the redemption of mankind might be completed; for this reason He said on the night preceding His death: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you before I suffer" (St. Luke xxii. 15). And before this time arrived He seemed to console Himself by saying, "I have a baptism, wherewith I am to be baptised; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" (St. Luke xii. 50.) I must be baptised with the baptism of my own blood; not indeed to wash my own soul, but those of my sheep, from the stains of their sins; and how ardently do I desire the arrival of the hour when I shall be bleeding and dead on the cross! St. Ambrose says that the Redeemer was not afflicted by the fear of death, but by the delay of our redemption: 'Not from the fear of His death, but from the delay of our redemption.'

In a sermon on the Passion, St. Zeno describes Jesus Christ choosing for Himself the trade of a carpenter in this world; for as such was He known and called: "Is not this the carpenter, and the son of a carpenter?" (St. Mark vi. 3.) Because carpenters are always handling wood and nails, it would seem that Jesus exercising this trade took pleasure in such things, seeing that they represented to Him better than any thing else the nails and the cross by which He willed to suffer: 'The Son of God took delight in this work, in which the wood and the nails continually reminded Him of the cross that awaited Him.'

Thus (to return to the point) we see it was not so much the thought of His Passion that afflicted the heart of our Redeemer, as the ingratitude with which mankind would repay His love. It was this ingratitude which made Him weep in the stable of Bethlehem; which caused Him to sweat blood in His deadly agony in the garden of Gethsemane; which filled Him with such sorrow, that He says even that it alone was sufficient to make Him die: "My soul is sorrowful even to death;" and finally, this ingratitude it was which caused Him to die in desolation and de-

prived of all consolation on the cross; for, says F. Suarez, Jesus Christ wished rather to satisfy for the pain of loss due to man, than for the pain of sense. Therefore the pains which our Lord suffered in His soul were much greater than all those He suffered in His body.

We then, also, by our sins contributed to make the whole life of our Saviour embittered and afflicted. But let us thank His goodness in giving us time to remedy the evil which has been done. How, then, are we to remedy it? By bearing patiently all the crosses which He sends us for our good. And He Himself tells us how we can bear these troubles with patience: "Put me as a seal upon thy heart" (Cant. viii. 6). Put upon thy heart the image of Me crucified; which means to say, consider My example and the pains which I have suffered for thee, and so shalt thou bear all crosses in peace. St. Augustine says that this heavenly Physician made Himself weak, that He might heal our weakness by His own infirmity: 'Wondrous medicine! the physician deigns to become sick, to heal his patient by his own infirmity;'[76] according to that which Isaias says, "by His bruises we are healed" (liii. 5). To heal our souls, which are weakened by sin, this medicine of suffering was the only one necessary; and Jesus Christ desired to be the first to taste it, that we who are the true sinners should not refuse to take it also: 'The physician drinks first, that the sick man may not hesitate to drink also.'[77] Believing this, says St. Epiphanius, as true followers of Jesus Christ, we ought to thank Him when He sends us crosses: 'It is a virtue peculiar to a Christian to give thanks when in adversity.' And this is reasonable, because by sending us crosses He makes us like to Himself. St. John Chrysostom makes an observation which is very consoling; he says that when we thank God for His benefits, we do but give Him that which we owe Him; but that when we suffer some pain with patience for His love, then God in a certain way becomes our debtor: 'If you thank God for good things, you pay a debt; if you thank Him for evil things, you make Him your debtor.' If thou wouldst render love to Jesus Christ, says St. Bernard, learn from Him how thou must love Him: 'Learn from Christ how to love Christ.'[78] Be happy

to suffer something for that God who has suffered so much for thee. The desire of pleasing Jesus Christ, and of making known to Him the love they bore Him was that which rendered the saints hungry and thirsty, not for honours and pleasures, but for sufferings and contempt. This made the Apostle say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi. 14). Being a happy companion of his crucified God, he desired no other glory than that of seeing himself on the cross. This was also what made St. Teresa say, 'Either to suffer or to die;' as if she had said, My Spouse, if it is Thy will to draw me to Thyself by death, behold I am ready to come, and I thank Thee for it; but if Thou wilt leave me any longer on this earth, I cannot trust myself to remain without suffering: 'Either to suffer or to die.' It was this that made St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi go still further: 'To suffer, and not to die;' by which she meant, my Jesus, I desire to be in heaven, that I may love Thee more; but I desire still more to suffer, that I may repay in part the love which Thou hast shown towards me by suffering so much for me. And the venerable Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, a Sicilian nun, was so enamoured of sufferings, that she went so far as to say, 'Truly Paradise is beautiful, but one thing is wanting, because there there is no suffering.' For the same reason also St. John of the Cross, when Jesus appeared to him with His cross on His shoulders, and said to him, John, ask what thou wilt of me, would ask for nothing but sufferings and contempt: 'Lord, that I may suffer and be despised for Thy sake.'

If, then, we have not the strength to desire and seek for sufferings, let us at least try to accept with patience those tribulations which God sends us for our good: 'Where there is patience, there is God,' says Tertullian. Where is God? Give me a soul that suffers with resignation, there assuredly is God: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart" (Ps. xxxiii. 19). The Lord takes delight in being near to those that are in affliction. But what kind of afflicted people? it must be those who suffer in peace, and are resigned to the Divine Will. To such as these God gives true peace, which consists, as St. Leo

says, in uniting our will to the Will of God: 'True Christian peace consists in not being separated from the Will of God.' St. Bonaventure tells us, that the Divine Will is like honey, which makes even bitter things sweet and pleasant. The reason is this, that he who obtains all he wishes has nothing left to desire: 'Blessed is he who has every thing he desires,' says St. Augustine. Therefore he who wills nothing but what God wills is always happy; for, as every thing happens by the Will of God, the soul has always that which it wills.

And when God sends us crosses, not only let us be resigned, but let us also thank Him, since it is a sign that He means to pardon our sins, and save us from hell, which we have deserved. He who has offended God must be punished; and therefore we ought always to beg of Him to chastise us in this world, and not in the next. That sinner is to be pitied who does not receive his chastisement in this life, but, on the contrary, is prosperous. May God preserve us from that mercy of which Isaias speaks: "Let us have pity on the wicked" (Is. xxvi. 10). 'I do not want this mercy,' says St. Bernard; 'such pity is worse than any anger.' The prayer of the Saint was, Lord, I desire not this mercy; for it is more terrible than any chastisement. When God does not punish a sinner in this life, it is a sign that He waits to punish Him in eternity, where the punishment will have no end. St. Lawrence Justinian says: 'From the price thy Redeemer had to pay, learn the value of His gifts, and the gravity of thy sin.'[79]

When we see a God dead on the cross, we ought to consider the great gift which He has made us in giving us His Blood to redeem us from hell, and at the same time to understand the malice of sin, which made the death of a God necessary to obtain pardon for us: 'Nothing,' says Dragone, 'frightens me away from sin so strongly as the sight of Thy Son suffering so exceedingly cruel a death as its penalty.'[80] O eternal God, nothing terrifies me more than to see Thy Son punished by so cruel a death on account of sin.

Let us therefore be comforted, when we see ourselves afflicted by God for our sins in this world; for it is a sign that He will show mercy to us in the next. The thought

alone of having displeased so good a God, if we love Him, ought to be of more consolation to us when we see ourselves chastised and afflicted, than if we were prosperous, and filled with the consolations of this world. St. John Chrysostom says: 'If a man loves God, he will have more consolation in being punished for having offended so merciful a Lord, than if he were to escape unpunished.' Any one who loves another (continues the Saint) is more punished in thinking that he has grieved the person he loves, than at the punishment he receives for his crime. Let us, then, be consoled when we are suffering; and if these reflections are not sufficient to console us, let us go to Jesus Christ, and He will console us, as He has promised to all: "Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you" (St. Matt. xi. 28). When we have recourse to our Lord, He will either deliver us from our affliction, or will give us strength to bear it patiently. And this is a greater grace than the former; because the tribulations which we bear with resignation, not only enable us to satisfy in this life for our debts, but also merit for us greater glory eternally in Paradise. Let us also, when we are afflicted and in sorrow, go and seek Mary, who is called the Mother of mercy, the cause of our joy, the comfort of the afflicted. Let us go to this good Lady, who (as Lanspergius says) never lets any one depart from her unconsoled and in sadness: 'She holds the bosom of her compassion open to all; she permits no one to depart from her in sorrow.' St. Bonaventure says, that it is her office to compassionate those who are in trouble: 'To thee is the office of mercy committed.' Whence Richard of St. Lawrence subjoins, that he who invokes her will always find her ready to assist him. 'And who has ever sought thy aid in vain? Who, O blessed one, ever asked thy assistance and was neglected?'[81]

AFFECTIONS AND PRAYERS.

St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi ordered two nuns,[82] over whom she was superior, to remain at the feet of the Holy Infant during the time of the Nativity, and there to imitate the service done to Him by the animals in the stable,

that is, that they should cherish the poor shivering Infant by the warmth of their praises, their thanksgivings and sighs of love which they were to pour out from their burning hearts. O my dear Redeemer, would that I also could fulfil that office! Yes, I praise Thee, my Jesus, I praise Thine infinite mercy, I praise Thine infinite charity, which makes Thee glorious both in heaven and earth; and I unite my voice with that of the Angel: "Glory to God in the highest." I thank Thee in the name of all mankind; but I thank Thee especially for myself, a miserable sinner. What would have become of me, what hope could I have of pardon and salvation, if Thou, my Saviour, hadst not come down from heaven to save me? I praise Thee, then, I thank Thee, and I love Thee. I love Thee above all things, I love Thee more than myself, I love Thee with all my soul, and I give myself all to Thee. Receive, O Sacred Infant, these acts of love: if they are but cold, because coming from a frozen heart, do Thou inflame this poor heart of mine; a heart that has offended Thee, but is now penitent. Yes, my Lord, I repent above all things for having despised Thee who hast loved me so much. Now I desire nothing but to love Thee; and this only do I beg of Thee: give me Thy love, and do with me what Thou wilt. I was once a slave of hell; but now that I am free from those unhappy chains, I consecrate myself entirely to Thee; I give Thee my body, my goods, my life, my soul, my will, and my whole liberty. I desire no longer to belong to myself, but only to Thee, my only good. Ah, bind my heart to Thy feet, that it may no more stray from Thee. O most holy Mary, obtain for me the grace of living always bound to thy Son by the blessed chains of love. Tell Him to accept me as the slave of His love. He grants all that you ask. Pray to Him, pray to Him, for me. This is my hope.

Discourse VIII.

THE ETERNAL WORD FROM BEING RICH MADE HIMSELF POOR.

"Shake thyself from the dust; arise, sit up, O Jerusalem." *Is.* lii. 2.

Arise, Christian soul, says the Prophet, shake off the dust of earthly affections: "Shake thyself from the dust,

arise;" arise from the mire in which thou art lying in misery, and sit up: "Sit up, O Jerusalem," sit as a queen, and rule over those passions which would deprive Thee of eternal glory, and which expose Thee to the danger of everlasting destruction. But to attain this, what must the soul do? It must study and consider well the life of Jesus Christ, who, from being rich, as possessing all the riches of heaven and earth, made Himself poor, despising all the goods of the world. It is impossible for any one to think of Jesus having become poor for his sake, and not at the same time to be moved to despise all for the love of Him. Let us so consider Him, and for this let us implore Jesus and Mary to enlighten us.

Every thing that is in heaven and in earth is God's. "The world is mine, and the fulness thereof" (Ps. xlix. 12). But even this is little; heaven and earth are but the least portion of the riches of God. The riches of God are infinite, and can never fail, because His riches do not depend on others, but He, who is the Infinite Good, possesses them Himself. Therefore it was that David said: "Thou art my God, for Thou hast no need of my goods" (Ps. xv. 1). Now this God, who is so rich, made Himself poor by becoming man, that He might thereby make us poor sinners rich: "Being rich, He became poor for your sakes; that through His poverty you might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). What! a God become poor? And why? Let us understand the reason. The riches of this world can be nothing but dust and mire; but it is mire that so completely blinds men, that they can no longer see which are the true riches. Before the coming of Jesus Christ, the world was full of darkness, because it was full of sin: "All flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth" (Gen. vi. 12). Mankind had corrupted the law and reason, so that, living like brutes, intent only on acquiring the riches and pleasures of this world, they cared no more for the riches of eternity. But the Divine Mercy ordained that the very Son of God Himself should come down to enlighten these blind creatures: "To them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death light is risen" (Is. ix. 2).

Jesus was called the Light of the Gentiles: "A light

for the revelation of the Gentiles. The light shineth in darkness." Thus did the Lord from the first, promise to be Himself our Master, and a Master who should be seen by us; who should teach us the way of salvation, which consists in the practice of all the virtues, and especially that of holy poverty: "And thy eyes shall see thy teacher" (Is. xxx. 20). Moreover, this Master was not only to teach us by His words, but still more by the example of His life. St. Bernard says, that poverty was not to be found in heaven, it existed only on earth: but that man, not knowing its value, did not seek after it. Therefore the Son of God came down from heaven to this earth, and chose it for His companion throughout His whole life, that by His example He might also render it precious and desirable to us: 'Poverty was not found in heaven, but she was well known on earth, and men knew not her excellence. So the Son of God loved her, and came down from heaven to take her to Himself, that we might learn to value her when we see how He regards her.'[83] And behold our Redeemer as an Infant, who at the very beginning of His life made Himself a teacher of poverty in the cave of Bethlehem; which is expressly called by the same St. Bernard, 'the School of Christ,' and by St. Augustine 'the Grotto of Doctrine.'

For this end was it decreed by God, that the edict of Cæsar should come forth; namely, that His Son should not only be born poor, but the poorest of men, causing Him to be born away from His own house, in a cave which was inhabited only by animals. Other poor people, who are born in their own houses, have certainly more comforts in the way of clothes, of fire, and the assistance of persons who lend their aid, even if it is out of compassion. What son of a poor person was ever born in a stable? In a stable only beasts are born. St. Luke relates how it happened. The time being come that Mary was to be delivered, Joseph goes to seek some lodging for her in Bethlehem. He goes about and inquires at every house, and he finds none. He tries to find one in an inn, but neither there does he find any: "There was no room for them in the inn" (St. Luke ii. 7). So that Mary was obliged to take

shelter and bring forth her Son in that cave where, notwithstanding all the concourse of people, there was no one; there were only two animals. When the sons of princes are born, they have warm rooms prepared for them, adorned with hangings, silver cradles, the finest clothes, and they are waited on by the highest nobles and ladies of the kingdom. The King of Heaven, instead of a warm and beautiful room, has nothing but a cold grotto, whose only ornament is the grass that grows there; instead of a bed of feathers, He has nothing but a little hard sharp straw; instead of fine garments, He has but a few poor rough cold and damp rags: 'The Creator of Angels' (writes St. Peter Damian), 'is not said to have been clad in purple, but to have been wrapped in rags. Let worldly pride blush at the resplendent humility of the Saviour.'[84] Instead of a fire, and of the attendance of great people, He has but the warm breath and the company of two animals; finally, in place of the silver cradle, He must lie in a vile manger. What is this, said St. Gregory of Nyssa, the King of kings, who fills heaven and earth with His presence, finds no better place to be born in than a stable for beasts? 'He who encompasses all things in His embrace is laid in the manger of brute cattle.' Yes, for this King of kings for our sakes wished to be poor, and the poorest of all. Even the children of the poor have milk enough provided for them, but Jesus Christ wished to be poor even in this; for the milk of Mary was miraculous, and she received it not naturally, but from heaven, as the holy Church teaches us: 'The Virgin gave Him milk from a breast filled from heaven.' And God, in order to comply with the desire of His Son, who wished to be poor in every thing, did not provide Mary with milk in abundance, but only with as much as would barely suffice to sustain the life of His Son; whence the same holy Church says: 'He was fed on a little milk.'

And Jesus Christ, as He was born poor, so did He also continue in poverty all His life; not only was He poor, but a beggar; for the word *egenus*, used by St. Paul, signifies in the Greek text a beggar; so that Cornelius à Lapide says: 'It is evident that Christ was not only poor, but also a beggar.' Our Redeemer, after being born in such poverty,

was obliged to fly from His own country into Egypt. In this journey, St. Bonaventure goes on to consider and compassionate the poverty of Mary and Joseph, who, travelling like poor people on so long a journey, and carrying the Holy Infant, must have suffered very much on account of their poverty: 'What did they do for food?' (says the Saint;) 'where did they repose at night? how were they lodged?' What could they have had to eat except a little hard bread? Where could they have slept at night, in that desert, if not on the ground, in the open air, or under some tree? Who that met these three great pilgrims on their way, would ever have taken them for any thing else than three poor beggars? They arrive in Egypt; and any one may imagine how great must have been the poverty, which for seven years they had to endure, being as they were without relations and without friends. St. Basil says, that they had scarcely enough to subsist on, procuring their food by the work of their hands: 'They worked hard, with the sweat of their brow, to gain for themselves by such means the necessaries of life.' Ludolph of Saxony tells us, that sometimes the Infant Jesus, constrained by hunger, went to ask Mary for a little bread, and that Mary sent Him away, saying that there was not any: 'Sometimes the Son asked for bread to satisfy His hunger, but the Mother had it not to give.'[85]

From Egypt they returned into Palestine to live again in Nazareth, and there Jesus continues His life of poverty. Here the house is poor and the furniture is poor: 'A poor cottage scantily furnished; such was the dwelling which the Creator of the World chose for Himself,' says St. Cyprian.[86] In this cottage He lives as a poor man, gaining His livelihood by the sweat of His brow, in the same manner that all workmen and their children do; so that He was called and was believed by the Jews to be a simple workman: 'Is not this the carpenter? Is not this the carpenter's son?' Finally, then, the Redeemer comes forth to preach, and in these three last years of His life He changes not His fortune or His condition; but He lives in even greater poverty than before, living on alms. Therefore He said to a certain man, who wished to follow

Him, in order to lead an easier life: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (St. Matt. viii. 20). He meant to say: Man, if thou hopest to better thy condition by becoming My follower, thou dost err, for I came on earth to teach poverty; and therefore have I made myself poorer than the foxes or the birds of the air, which have their holes and their nests; while I have not even a foot of ground belonging to me on this earth, where I may rest my head; and so would I have all my disciples to be: 'Dost thou hope' (is the comment of Cornelius à Lapide on this text) 'that in following Me thou wilt increase thy riches? Thou art in error, for I, as the master of perfection, am poor, and such I wish my disciples to be' For it follows, says St. Jerome, that 'the servant of Christ has nothing but Christ.'[87] The true servants of Christ neither have, nor desire to have, any thing but Christ. In a word, Christ lived poor, and He at last died poor; for St. Joseph of Arimathea was obliged to give Him a burial-place, and others, out of charity, provided the sheet in which to wrap His dead body.

Cardinal Hugo, meditating on the poverty, the contempt, and the pains to which it pleased our Redeemer to submit, says: 'He made Himself as it were a fool, and condescended to our miseries.' God seems to have gone on to madness in His love for men, being willing to embrace so many miseries to obtain for them the riches of Divine grace and eternal glory. And whoever, says the same author, would have believed, if Christ had not done it, that while He was the master of all riches, He would have made Himself so poor! that being Lord of all, He should have become a servant! that being the King of heaven, He should have chosen to be so despised! that being blessed, He should choose so many sufferings! 'Who could believe that the possessor of all things would condescend to poverty,—the Lord to slavery, the King to ignominy, the ever-blessed to suffering!' There are, it is true, many princes in this world who delight in employing their riches for the relief of the poor; but where shall we find a king, who, to alleviate the poverty of the poor, has

made himself poor like them, as Jesus Christ did? It is related as a prodigious example of charity, that the holy King Edward, seeing a beggar on the road, who was unable to move, and was there remaining utterly abandoned, took him up on his shoulders with great tenderness, and carried him to the church. Yes, this was so great an act of charity, that all the people were astonished at it; but Edward did not for this cease to be king, and he remained as rich as he was before. But the Son of God, the King of heaven and earth, to save the lost sheep, which was man, not only descended from heaven to seek him, not only put him on His shoulders, but laid aside His own majesty, His riches, and honours; He made Himself poor, even the poorest among men: 'He hid His purple under miserable garments,' says St. Peter Damian;[88] He hid the purple, that is, the Divine Majesty, beneath the clothes of a wretched carpenter's boy: 'He who enriches others' (says St. Greg. Nazianzen) 'has no riches Himself; He undergoes the poverty of my carnal nature, that I may obtain the wealth of His Divine Nature.' He who provides riches for the rich chose Himself to be poor, that He might merit for us, not indeed earthly, miserable, and perishable riches, but Divine riches, which are infinite and eternal, thus endeavouring by His example to detach us from the affection of all earthly things, which brings us often into great danger of everlasting destruction. It is mentioned in the life of St. John Francis Regis, that his ordinary meditation was on the poverty of Jesus Christ.

Albertus Magnus tells us that Jesus Christ chose to be born in a stable, open to the public road, for two reasons: one, that we might understand more fully that we are all pilgrims in this world, and that we are only here in passing. 'Thou art a stranger, look and pass by,' says St. Augustine. Any one who is lodging in a temporary place, would not certainly bestow any affection on it; thinking that in a short time he will have to leave it. Oh, if men would always remember that they are but travellers in this world, and on their way to eternity, who would be found to attach himself to earthly riches; and so doing, to run the risk of losing the riches of eternity? The other reason was, says

Albertus Magnus, 'to teach us to despise the world;' that by this example we might learn to despise the world, whose riches cannot satisfy our hearts. The world teaches its followers that happiness consists in the possession of riches, pleasures, and honours; but this deceitful world was condemned by the Son of God when He became man. "Now is the judgment of the world" (St. John xii. 31). And this condemnation of the world began (according to St. Anselm and St. Bernard) in the stable of Bethlehem. Jesus Christ wished to be born there in poverty, "that through His poverty we might become rich;" that from His Divine example we should pluck out of our hearts all affection to the things we possess here, and should give it to virtue and holy love. 'Christ,' says Cassian, 'began a new way; He loved that which the world hated, namely, poverty.'

Therefore the Saints, after the example of the Saviour, have always sought to despoil themselves of every thing, and to follow, like poor people, Jesus Christ, who was Himself poor. St. Bernard says, 'The poverty of Christ is richer than all the treasures of the world.'[89] The poverty of Christ brings us greater riches than all worldly treasures; because it excites us in acquiring the riches of heaven, and in despising those of the world. Hear what St. Paul said: "I count all things but as dung, that I may gain Christ" (Phil. iii. 8). When compared to the grace of Jesus Christ, the Apostle esteemed every thing else as dung and filth. Look at St. Benedict, who, in the flower of his youth, left the riches and comfort of his father's house, and went to live in a cave, and received a little bread as an alms from a monk called Romanus, who supported him in this way out of charity. See how St. Francis Borgia abandons all his riches, and goes to live like a poor man in the Society of Jesus. St. Anthony, abbot, sells his rich patrimony, distributes it to the poor, and then goes to dwell in a desert. Behold St. Francis of Assisi giving back even his shirt to his father, that he may live as a beggar all his life.

He who covets possessions, said St. Philip Neri, will never become a saint. And so it is; for the heart that is full of this world has no room for Divine love: 'Dost thou

bring an empty heart?' This was what the monks of old chiefly required, in accepting those who came to join themselves to their company. And when they asked them, dost thou bring a heart void of all earthly affection? they meant to say: If thou dost not do so, thou canst never belong entirely to God: "For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also" (St. Matt. vi. 21). The treasure of each one is any thing that he loves and prizes. Once, when a certain rich man died, who was damned, St. Anthony of Padua published his damnation from the pulpit; and, as a sign of the truth of what he said, he told the people to go to the place where he had kept his money, and that they should find the heart of that wretched man in the midst of his money. And they did actually go, and they found his heart still warm in the midst of his money. God cannot be the treasure of any one who retains affection for the goods of this life; therefore David prayed: "Create a clean heart in me, O God" (Ps. l. 12). Lord, cleanse my heart from earthly affections, that I may be able to say that Thou art the God of my heart, and my eternal riches: "The God of my heart, and my portion for ever." He, then, who really wishes to become a saint, must drive away from his heart every thing that is not God. What are treasures? what possessions? what riches? what is the use of these goods, if they do not satisfy the heart, and we must leave them so soon? "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume . . . . . but lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven" (St. Matt. vi. 19-20).

O what great happiness is prepared by God in heaven for those who love Him! O what a treasure is the grace of God and Divine love to those who know it! "That I may enrich them that love Me" (Prov. viii. 21). God contains in Himself and brings with Him riches and the reward: "Behold His reward is with Him," says Isaias (ch. lxii. 11). It is God alone who is the reward of the blessed in heaven; He alone is sufficient to make them happy: "I am thy reward exceeding great" (Gen. xv. 1). But he who would love God exceedingly in heaven must first love Him very much on earth. According to the degree of love which we bear towards God when we finish the journey of

life, will be the degree of love with which we shall continue to love God for all eternity. And if we wish to be certain of never more being separated from our Sovereign Good in this life, let us always bind ourselves more closely to Him by the chains of love, and say with the sacred spouse: "I found Him whom my soul loveth; I held Him; and I will not let Him go" (Cant. iii. 4). How did the spouse hold her beloved? 'With the arms of love,' replies the Abbot William.[90] 'Yes,' says St. Ambrose, 'God is held with the chains of love.'[91] God allows Himself to be bound by us with chains of love. Happy, then, is the man who can say with St. Paulinus: 'Let the rich enjoy their riches, kings their kingdoms; but let Christ be my riches and my kingdom.' And with St. Ignatius: 'Give me only Thy love and Thy grace, and I am rich enough.' Lord, give me Thy grace and Thy holy love; may I love Thee, and be loved by Thee; and I am sufficiently rich: I desire nothing more; nor is there any thing else that I could desire. 'No one,' says St. Leo, 'need fear want, who possesses all things in the Lord.'[92] Let us also never fail to have recourse to the Divine Mother, and to love her, after God, above all things; for she herself assures us (in the words of the holy Church) that she enriches with graces all those who love her: 'With me are riches . . . . that I may enrich them that love me.'

COLLOQUY.

My dear Jesus, inflame me with Thy holy love; since for this end Thou didst come upon this earth. It is true that I am so wretched as to have often offended Thee, after the many special lights and graces which have been bestowed on me; I am no longer worthy to be consumed in those blessed flames with which the saints are inflamed, I ought rather to burn in the fire of hell: but now, being free from that prison which I have deserved, I feel that Thou dost also turn towards me notwithstanding my ingratitude, and say, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' I thank Thee, my God, that Thou dost again give me this sweet precept; and as Thou dost command me to love Thee, I will obey Thee, and will love Thee with my whole

heart. Lord, I have hitherto been ungrateful and blind, because I have not been mindful of the love Thou hast borne me. But now Thou dost enlighten me again, and dost make me understand how much Thou hast done for my sake: now that I think that Thou didst become man for me, that Thou didst take upon Thee my miseries; now that I see Thee trembling with cold on the straw, crying and weeping for me,—O my infant God, how can I live without loving Thee? Ah, my Love, pardon me for all the displeasure I have caused Thee. O God, how could I, knowing as I did by faith how much Thou hast suffered for me, how could I have offended Thee so much? But this straw that torments Thee, that vile manger in which Thou art lying, those tender cries which Thou dost put forth, those loving tears which Thou dost shed; these all make me firmly hope for pardon and grace to love Thee for the rest of my life. I love Thee, O Incarnate Word; I love Thee, O Divine Child; and I give myself all to Thee. For the sake of those pains which Thou didst suffer in the stable of Bethlehem, accept, O my Jesus, this miserable sinner, who desires to love Thee. Help me, give me perseverance; I hope for all things from Thee. O Mary, great Mother of this great Son, and most beloved by Him, pray to Him for me.

Discourse IX.

THE ETERNAL WORD FROM BEING HIGH MADE HIMSELF LOW.

"Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart."
St. Matt. xi. 29.

Pride was the chief cause of the fall of our first parents, who, not being willing to submit themselves to the obedience of God, thereby caused their own ruin, and that of all the human race. But the mercy of God, as a remedy against such destruction, decreed that His only-begotten Son should humble Himself to take upon Himself our flesh; and by the example of His life should induce men to love humility, and to detest pride, which renders them hateful in the sight of God and man. For this end is it that St. Bernard now invites us to visit the cave of Bethlehem, say-

ing: 'Let us go even to Bethlehem: there we have what to admire, what to love, and what to imitate.' Yes; in that cave we have first of all cause to wonder. What! a God in a stable! a God on straw! that God who sits on the highest throne of the majesty of heaven: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated," says Isaias (vi. 1); and then where do we see Him? In a manger, unknown and abandoned, with none around Him save a few poor shepherds and two animals! 'We have what to love;' we shall easily find One in whom to place our affection, seeing there a God, who is the Infinite Good, and who has chosen to debase Himself by appearing to the world as a poor Infant, thereby to make Himself more endearing and pleasing in our eyes. As St. Bernard says again: 'The more degraded He appears to me, the more dear is He to me.' We shall lastly find what to imitate: 'We have what to imitate.' We find the Supreme Being, the King of heaven, become a humble poor little Infant, desirous in this way, from His very infancy, of teaching us by His example that which He was afterwards to tell us by word of mouth: 'He proclaims by His example (says the same holy abbot) what He is afterwards to teach by His mouth; learn of Me, for I am gentle and humble of heart.' Let us ask for light of Jesus and Mary.

Who does not know that God is the first, the highest in nobility, and the source whence all nobility proceeds? He is of an infinite greatness. He is independent; for He has not received His greatness from any other, but has always possessed it in Himself. He is the Lord of all, whom all creatures obey: "The winds and the sea obey Him" (St. Matt. viii. 27). Truly, therefore, does the Apostle say, that to God alone belongs honour and glory: "To the only God be honour and glory" (1 Tim. i. 17). But the Eternal Word, to provide a remedy for man's disgrace, which was brought about by his pride, having made Himself an example of poverty (as we considered in the last discourse), to detach man from worldly goods, desired also to make Himself an example of humility, to free him from the vice of pride. And in doing this, the first and greatest example of humility which He gave

was making Himself a man, and clothing Himself with our miseries: "In habit found as a man" (Phil. ii. 7). Cassian says that any one who puts on the dress of another man hides himself under it; in like manner God hid His Divine nature under the lowly dress of human flesh. 'He who is clothed, is hidden under his clothes; so the Divine Nature concealed itself beneath the clothing of flesh.' And St. Bernard: 'The Divine Majesty became small, in order that It might join Itself to our earthly nature; and that God and clay, majesty and weakness, the most extreme abasement and the highest grandeur, might be united in one person.'[93] A God to unite Himself to dust! greatness to misery! sublimity to wretchedness! But that which must make us wonder still more is, that not only did God choose to appear as a creature, but as a sinful creature, putting on sinful flesh: "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. viii. 3).

But the Son of God was not even contented to appear as a man, and as a sinful man; He desired further to choose the most lowly and humble life among men; so that Isaias called Him the last, the most humble of men: "Despised and the most abject of men" (Isa. liii. 3). Jeremias said that He should be covered with ignominy: "He shall be filled with reproaches" (Lamen. iii. 30). And David, that He should be made the scorn of men, and the outcast of the people: "The reproach of men, and the outcast of the people" (Ps. xxi. 7). For such an end Jesus Christ wished to be born in the most abject way that could be imagined. What an ignominy for a man, even though he is poor, to be born in a stable! Who is there that is born in a stable? The poor are born in their huts, at least on beds of straw; stables are fit only for beasts and worms; and the Son of God chose to be born on this earth like a worm: "I am a worm, and no man" (Ps. xxi. 7). Yes, says St. Augustine, in such humility did the King of the universe choose to be born, in order to show us His majesty and power in His very humility, by which He could through His example make those men who are born full of pride love humility: 'Such was the will of the Most High, who is also so humble, to show forth His majesty by very humility.'[94]

An angel announced to the shepherds the birth of the Messias and the signs which He gave them, by which they might find Him and recognise Him, were all signs of humility. When you shall find a child (said he) in a stable, wrapped up in rags, and lying in a manger on the straw, know that it is your Saviour: "And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger" (St. Luke ii. 12). In such a state is it that we find a God, who is coming to this earth to destroy pride. Then the life which Jesus Christ led in Egypt, where He was in exile, was in conformity with His birth. During the years He remained there, He lived as a stranger, unknown, and in poverty, in the midst of those barbarians. Who knew Him there? who made any account of Him? He returned to Judea, and continued to live the same sort of life He had led in Egypt. He lived for thirty years in a shop, supposed by all to be the son of a common workman, doing the work of a serving-boy, poor, unseen, and despised. In that holy family there were no servants. 'Joseph and Mary,' writes St. Peter Chrysologus, 'have neither servant nor servant-maid: themselves are at once master and servant.' There was but one servant in that family, and He was the Son of God, who wished to become the Son of Man, that is, of Mary, that He might be a humble servant, and obey a man and a woman as their servant: "And He was subject to them" (St. Luke ii. 51).

After thirty years of hidden life, finally the time came that our Saviour was to appear in public to preach His heavenly doctrines, which He had come from heaven to teach us; and therefore it was necessary that He should make Himself known as the true Son of God. But, O my God! how many were there that acknowledged and honoured Him as He deserved? Besides the few disciples who followed Him, all the rest, instead of honouring Him, despised Him as a vile man and an impostor. Ah, then was verified in the fullest manner the prophecy of Simeon: "This child is set for a sign which shall be contradicted" (St. Luke ii. 34). Jesus Christ was contradicted and despised by all: He was despised in His doctrine; for when He declared that He was the only-begotten Son of God,

He was called a blasphemer, and as such was condemned to death; as the wicked Caiphas said, "He hath blasphemed; He is guilty of death" (St. Matt. xxvi. 65–66). He was despised in His wisdom; for He was esteemed a fool without sense: "He is mad: why hear you Him?" (St. John x. 20.) His morals were reproached as being scandalous,—they called Him a glutton, a drunkard, and the friend of wicked people: "Behold a man that is a glutton, and a drinker of wine, a friend of publicans and sinners" (St. Luke vii. 34). He was accused of being a sorcerer, and of having commerce with devils: "By the prince of the devils He casteth out devils" (St. Matt. ix. 34). He was called a heretic, and one possessed by the devil: "Do we not say well, that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" (St. John viii. 48.) A deceiver: "For that deceiver said" &c. (St. Matt. xxvii. 63). In fine, Jesus Christ was considered by all the people so wicked a man, that there was no need of a tribunal to condemn Him to be crucified: "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee" (St. John xviii. 30).

At last the Saviour came to the end of His life and to His Passion; and, O God, what contempt and ill-treatment did He not receive in His Passion! He was betrayed and sold by one of His own disciples for thirty pieces of money, a less price than would be given for a beast. By another disciple He was denied. He was dragged through the streets of Jerusalem bound like a thief, abandoned by all, even by His few remaining disciples. He was treated shamefully as a slave, when He was scourged. He was struck on the face in public. He was treated as a fool, when Herod had a white garment put on Him, that He might be thought a foolish person without any sense: 'He despised Him as ignorant,' says St. Bonaventure, 'because He did not answer a word; as foolish, because He did not defend Himself.' He was treated as a mock-king, when they put into His hand a piece of reed instead of a sceptre, a tattered red garment upon His shoulders instead of the purple, and a chaplet of thorns on His head for a crown; after thus deriding Him, they saluted Him: "Hail, King of the Jews!" and then they covered Him with spitting and

blows, "and spitting upon Him" (St. Matt. xxvii. 3); "and they gave Him blows" (St. John xix. 3). Finally, Jesus Christ willed to die; but by what death? by the most ignominious death, which was the death of the cross: "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). Any one who suffered the death of the cross at that time was considered the vilest and most wicked of criminals: "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13). Therefore, the names of those who were crucified were always held as cursed and infamous; so that the Apostle wrote: "Christ is made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13). St. Athanasius, commenting on this passage, says: 'He is called a curse, because He bore the curse for us.' Jesus took upon Himself this curse, that He might save us from eternal malediction. But where, Lord, exclaims St. Thomas of Villanova, where is Thy beauty, where is Thy majesty in the midst of so much ignominy? 'Where, O God, is Thy glory, where Thy majesty?' And he answers: 'Ask not, God has gone out of Himself' (*extasim passus est Deus*).[95] And the Saint's meaning was this: that we should not seek for glory and majesty in Jesus Christ, since He had come to give us an example of humility, and manifest the love that He bears towards men; and that this love had made Him, as it were, go out of Himself.

In the fables of the pagans, it is related that the god Hercules, for the love which he bore to the king Augea, undertook to tame his horses; and that the god Apollo, out of love for Admettus, kept his flocks for him. These are inventions of imagination; but it is of faith that Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, for the love of men, humbled Himself to be born in a stable, and to lead a contemptible life, and in the end to die by the hands of executioners on an infamous gibbet. 'O grace! O power of love!' exclaims St. Bernard, 'didst Thou, the Most High, become the lowest of all!'[96] O the strength of Divine love! the greatest of all has made Himself the lowest of all! 'Who did this?' rejoins St. Bernard, 'it was love, regardless of its dignity. Love triumphs over God.' Love does not consider dignity, when there is question of gaining for itself the person it

loves. God, who can never be conquered by any one, has been conquered by love; for it was that love that compelled Him to make Himself man, and to sacrifice Himself for the love of man in an ocean of sorrows and contempt. 'He emptied Himself,' concludes the holy abbot, 'that thou mayest know that it was through love that the Highest made Himself equal to thee.' The Divine Word, who is majesty itself, humbled Himself so far as to annihilate Himself, that mankind might know how much He loved them. Yes, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, because in no other way could He better show forth the Divine love than by abasing Himself, and taking upon Himself the greatest misery and ignominy that men even suffer on this earth. 'God could not otherwise declare His love for us than by descending for our sakes to what was most low.'[97] Richard of St. Victor adds, that man having had the boldness to offend the majesty of God, in order to expiate his guilt, the intervention of the most excessive humiliation was necessary: 'For the expiation of the sin, the humiliation of the highest to the lowest was necessary.'[98] St. Bernard goes on to say, the more our God abased Himself, so much the more did He show forth His goodness and love: 'The lower He showed Himself to be in human nature, the greater did He declare Himself in goodness.'

Now, after a God has suffered so much for the love of man, will man have a repugnance to humble himself for the love of God? "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5). He who is not humble, and who does not seek to imitate the humility of Jesus Christ, is not worthy of the name of Christian; for Jesus Christ, as St. Augustine says, came into the world in a humble way to put down pride. The pride of man was the disease which drew from heaven this Divine Physician, which loaded Him with ignominies, and caused Him to die on the cross. Let the proud man, then, at least be ashamed when he sees that a God so humbled Himself in order to cure him of pride: 'Because of this very vice of pride, God came in humility. This disease drew Him down from heaven, humbled Him even to the form of a servant, overwhelmed with calumnies, hung Him upon the cross. Blush then, O

man, to be proud, for whom God has become humble.'[99] And St. Peter Damian writes: 'To raise us, He lowered Himself.' He chose to abase Himself, that He might raise us out of the mire of our sins, and might place us in the company of the angels in heaven: "Lifting up the poor out of the dunghill, that He may place him with the princes of His people" (Ps. cxii. 7-8). 'His abasement is our exaltation.'[100] O the greatness of Divine love! exclaims St. Augustine. For the sake of man, a God takes upon Himself contempt, that He may share His honour with man. He makes Himself familiar with grief and pain, that man may have salvation: He even suffers death, to obtain life for man. 'O wondrous condescension! He comes to receive contempt, that He may confer honours; He comes to be satiated with grief, that He may give salvation; He comes to undergo death, that He may give life.' Jesus Christ, by choosing for Himself so humble a birth, so despicable a life, and such an ignominious death, has ennobled and taken away all bitterness from contempt and opprobrium. It is for this that the saints in this world were always so fond and even desirous of being despised; they seemed not to be able to desire or seek for any thing but to be despised and trodden underfoot for the love of Jesus Christ. When the Divine Word came upon this earth, well was that prophecy of Isaias fulfilled: "In the dens where dragons dwelt before shall rise up the verdure of the reed and the bulrush" (chap. xxxv. 7). That where the demons, the spirits of pride, dwelt, there, at the sight of the humility of Jesus Christ, should arise the spirit of humility. 'The verdure of the reed, which signifies humility,' says St. Ugo, commenting on this passage; the humble man is empty in his own eyes; the humble are not full of themselves, as the proud are, but empty, considering what is the truth, that all they have is the gift of God. From this we may well understand, that a humble soul is as dear to God as a proud heart is odious in His eyes. But is it possible, says St. Bernard, for people to be proud after seeing the life of Jesus Christ? 'Though the Divine majesty annihilates itself, a worm lifts itself up in pride!' Is it possible that a mere worm, loaded with sins, should be proud, when

he sees the God of infinite majesty and purity humble Himself so much, in order to teach us to be humble! But let it be known that proud people do not get on with God. St. Augustine thus warns us: 'Lift yourself up, and God will depart from you; humble yourself, and God will come to you.' The Lord flies from the proud; but on the contrary, God cannot despise a heart that humbles itself, even though it should be a sinful one. "A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." God has promised to hear all who pray to Him: "Ask, and it shall be given you . . . . For every one that asketh receiveth" (St. Matt. vii. 7). But He has declared that He will not listen to the proud, as St. James tells us: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (ch. iv. 6). He resists the prayers of the proud, and does not listen to them; but He cannot deny any grace to the humble, whatever they may ask. In fact, St. Teresa said, that the greatest graces she had ever received, were those which were granted her when she more particularly humbled herself in the presence of God. The prayer of the humble penetrates into heaven by its own efficacy, without needing any one to present it; and it does not depart without obtaining from God that which it desires: "The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds . . . . and he will not depart till the Most High beholds" (Eccles. xxxv. 21).

COLLOQUY.

O my despised Jesus, by Thy example Thou hast done too much to render reproaches and contempt sweet in the eyes of those that love Thee. But how is it, then, that instead of embracing them, as Thou hast done, when I received some little contempt from men, I behaved with so much pride, and took occasion from it to offend Thy infinite majesty, sinner and proud that I was? Ah, Lord, I see why it is; I did not know how to bear an affront patiently, because I did not know how to love Thee. If I had loved Thee truly, it would have been sweet and pleasing to me. But since Thou dost promise pardon to him who repents, I repent with all my heart of all the excesses of my life; a life so unlike Thine. But I desire to amend; and therefore

I promise Thee to be willing to suffer patiently from this day forward all the contempt to which I shall be subject, for Thy love, O my Jesus, who wast so much despised for the love of me. I understand that humiliations are precious mines, by which Thou dost enrich souls with eternal treasures. I deserve other humiliations and other reproaches for having despised Thy grace; I deserve to be trampled on by the devils. But Thy merits are my hope. I will change my life, and will no longer displease Thee; henceforth I will seek for nothing but Thy Divine pleasure. I have deserved many times to be sent to burn in hell-fire; Thou hast waited for me till now, and, as I hope, hast pardoned me; grant, therefore, that instead of burning in that unhappy flame, I may be inflamed with the blessed fire of Thy holy love. No, I will no longer live without loving Thee. Help me; let me not live any more ungrateful to Thee, as I have hitherto done. For the future I will love Thee only; I desire that my heart should belong to Thee alone. Ah, take possession of it, and keep it for ever, that I may be always Thine, and Thou mayest be always mine: that I may love Thee, and Thou mayest love me for ever. Yes, this is my hope, O my God, that I shall always love Thee, and that Thou wilt always love me. I believe in Thee, Infinite Goodness; I hope in Thee, Infinite Goodness; I love Thee, Infinite Goodness; I love Thee, and I will say always I love Thee, I love Thee, I love Thee and because I love Thee, I will do all I can to please Thee. Dispose of me as Thou wilt. All I ask is, that Thou wouldest give me grace to love Thee, and then do with me as Thou pleasest. Thy love is, and always shall be, my only treasure, my only desire, my only good, my only love. Mary, my hope, Mother of beautiful love, do thou help me in loving the God of love with all my heart and for ever.

Discourse X.

OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST. FOR CHRISTMAS NIGHT.

"I bring you good tidings of great joy . . . . for this day is born to you a Saviour." *St. Luke* ii. 10, 11.

"I bring you good tidings of great joy." Thus said the angel to the shepherds, and thus do I say to you, O devout souls, on this night. I bring you tidings of great joy. And what tidings could be a greater joy to a nation of poor exiles condemned to death than for them to be told that their Saviour had come, not only to deliver them from death, but also to obtain for them permission to return to their country? And this is what I announce to you this night: 'A Saviour is born to you.' Jesus Christ is born; and He is born for you, to deliver you from everlasting death, and to open to you heaven, which is our country, and from which we had been banished in punishment for our sins. But in order that you should show your gratitude from this time forth, by loving your new-born Redeemer, allow me to set Him before your eyes; let me show you where He was born, and where He may be found on this night, that you may go to Him and thank Him for such a great favour, and for His great love. Let us ask for light from Jesus and Mary.

Let me, then, briefly relate to you the history of the birth of this King of the World, who came down from heaven for your salvation. Octavius Augustus, the emperor of Rome, wishing to know the strength of his empire, decreed that there should be a general numbering of all his subjects; and for this purpose he ordered all the governors of the provinces—and, among the rest, to Cyrinus, governor of Judea—to make every one come to enrol himself, and at the same time pay a certain tribute as a sign of vassalage: "There went out a decree . . . that the whole world should be enrolled" (St. Luke ii. 1). As soon as this decree was promulgated, Joseph obeys immediately; he does not even wait till his holy spouse should be delivered, though she was near her time. I say he obeyed immediately, and set out on his journey with Mary, then pregnant with the Di-

vine Word, to go and enrol himself in the city of Bethlehem; "to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child." The journey was a long one—for, according to some authors, it was ninety leagues; that is to say, four days—long and difficult, for they had to traverse mountains and steep paths, through the wind, the rain, and the cold.

When a king makes his first entry into a city of his kingdom, what honours are not prepared for him! what preparations are not made, and triumphal arches erected! Do thou then, O happy Bethlehem! prepare thyself to receive thy King with honour; for the prophet Micheas has told thee that He is coming to thee, and that He is Lord not only of all Judea, but of the whole world. And know, says the prophet, thou, out of all the cities of the earth, art the fortunate one, which has been chosen by the King of Heaven for His birth-place, that He may afterwards reign, not indeed in Judea, but in the hearts of men who live in Judea and in all the rest of the world: "And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Judea: out of thee shall He come forth that is to be ruler in Israel" (Mich. v. 2). But behold these two illustrious pilgrims, Joseph and Mary, who bears within her womb the Saviour of the world, are about to enter into Bethlehem. They enter, and go to the house of the imperial minister to pay the tribute, and to enrol themselves in the book as subjects of Cæsar, where they also inscribed the offspring of Mary, namely, Jesus Christ, who was the Lord of Cæsar and of all the princes of the earth. But who acknowledges them? Who goes before them to show them honour? who salutes them, and who receives them? "He came into His own, and His own received Him not" (St. John i. 11). They travel like poor people, and as such they are despised; they are treated even worse than the other poor, and are driven away. Yes; for "it came to pass when they were there her days were accomplished that she should be delivered" (St. Luke ii. 6). Mary knew that the time of her delivery was come, and that it was here, and on that night, that the Incarnate Word willed to be born, and to manifest Himself to the world. She therefore told Joseph, and he hastened to procure some lodging in the houses of the townspeople,

so as not to take his spouse to the inn to be delivered, as it was not a decent place for her to be in; besides which, it was then full of people. But he found not any one to listen to him; and very likely he was insulted, and called a fool by some of them, for taking his wife about at that time of night, and in such a crowd of people, when she was near her delivery; so that at last he was obliged, unless he would remain all night in the street, to take her to the public inn, where there were many other poor people lodging that night. He went there; but they were refused admittance even there, and they were told that there was no room for them: "There was no room for them in the inn" (St. Luke ii. 7). There was room for all, even for the lowest, but not for Jesus Christ. That inn was a figure of those ungrateful hearts where many find room for miserable creatures, but not for God. How many love their relations, their friends, even animals, but do not love Jesus Christ, and care neither for His grace nor His love! But the ever-blessed Mary said once to a devout soul: 'It was the dispensation of God that neither I nor my Son should find a lodging amongst men, that those souls who love Jesus might offer themselves as a lodging-place, and might affectionately invite Him to come into their hearts'[101]

But let us go on with the history. These poor travellers, then, seeing themselves repulsed on every side, leave the city to try and find some place of refuge without its walls. They walk on in the dark; they go round about and examine, till at last they see a grotto, which was cut out of a stone in the mountain under the city. Barradas, Bede, and Brocardus say that the place where Jesus Christ was born was a rock that had been excavated under the walls of Bethlehem, divided off from the city, and like a cavern, and which served as a stable for cattle. When they came to it, Mary said to Joseph: 'There is no occasion to go any further; let us go into this cave and remain there.' 'What!' replied Joseph; 'my spouse, dost thou not see that this cave is quite exposed; that it is cold and damp, and that water is running down on all sides? Dost thou not see that it is no lodging for men, but is a shed for beasts? How can you stop here all night, and be delivered

here?' Then Mary said, 'It is nevertheless true that this stable is the regal palace in which the Eternal Son of God desires to be born on earth.'

Oh, what must the angels have said, when they saw the Divine Mother enter into this cave to bring forth her Son! The sons of princes are born in rooms adorned with gold; they have cradles enriched with precious stones, fine clothes, a retinue of the first lords of the kingdom; and has the King of Heaven nothing but a cold stable without a fire to be born in, some poor swaddling-clothes to cover Him, a little straw for His bed, and a vile manger to lie in? 'Where is the palace,' asks St. Bernard, 'where is the throne?' Where, says the Saint, is the court, where is the royal palace for this King of Heaven? for I see nothing but two animals to keep Him company, and a manger for cattle, where He must be laid. O happy grotto, that witnessed the birth of the Divine Word! Happy manger, to have had the honour of receiving the Lord of Heaven! Happy straw, which served as a bed to Him who sits on the shoulders of the seraphim! Ah, when we think of the birth of Jesus Christ, and of the manner in which it took place, we ought all to be inflamed with love; and when we hear the names of cave, manger, straw, milk, tears, in reference to the birth of the Redeemer, these names ought to be so many incitements to our love, and arrows to wound our hearts. Yes, happy was that grotto, that crib, that straw; but still happier are those souls who love this amiable Lord with fervour and tenderness, and who receive Him in the Holy Communion into hearts burning with love. Oh, with what desire and pleasure does Jesus Christ enter into and repose in a heart that loves Him!

No sooner had Mary entered into the cavern than she began immediately to pray; and the hour of her delivery being come, she loosened her hair, out of reverence, spreading it over her shoulders; and behold she sees a great light, she feels in her heart a heavenly joy! She casts down her eyes; and, O God! what does she see? She sees on the ground an infant, so tender and beautiful, that He fills her with love; but He trembles, He cries, and stretches out His arms to show that He desires she should take Him into

her bosom: 'I stretched forth My arms to seek the caresses of My Mother,' according to the revelation of St. Bridget. Mary calls Joseph. 'Come, Joseph,' she said, 'come and see; for the Son of God is now born.' Joseph comes; and when he sees Jesus already born, he adores Him in the midst of a torrent of sweet tears: 'The old man entered, and, prostrating himself, wept for joy.' Then the Blessed Virgin reverently took her beloved Son in her arms, and placed Him in her bosom. She tried to warm Him by the heat of her cheeks and of her bosom: 'Pressing Him to her cheeks and bosom, she warmed Him with all the joy and tenderness of a mother's love.'[102]

Consider the devotion, the tenderness, the love which Mary felt at seeing in her arms and on her breast the Lord of the World, the Son of the Eternal Father, who had deigned even to become her Son, choosing her from amongst all women to be His Mother. Mary, now holding Him to her bosom, adores Him as God, kissing His feet as her King, and then His face as her Son. Then she hastily seeks to cover Him, and wraps Him up in swaddling-clothes. But, O God! how hard and rough are those clothes; for they are clothes of the poor, and they are cold and damp, and in that cave there is no fire to warm them by!

Come, ye monarchs and emperors, come, all ye princes of the world, come and adore your highest King, who for your love is now born; and born in such poverty in a cave. But who appears? No one. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (St. John i. 11). Ah! the Son of God has indeed come into the world; but the world will not know Him. But if men do not come, the angels draw near to adore their Lord. Thus did the Eternal Father ordain for the honour of His Son: "And let all the angels of God adore Him" (Heb. i. 6). They come in great numbers and praise their God, singing with great joy, "Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good-will" (St. Luke ii. 14). Glory to the Divine mercy, which, instead of chastising rebellious men, causes this same God to take upon Himself their punishment, and so to save them. Glory to the Divine wisdom, which

has devised a means of satisfying His justice, and at the same time of delivering man from the death he had deserved. Glory to the Divine power, destroying in so signal a manner the powers of hell, by the Divine Word coming in poverty to suffer pains, contempt, and death; and thus to draw the hearts of men to Himself, and to leave every thing for His sake,—honours, riches, and life; as so many virgins and young men have done, and even nobles and princes, to show their gratitude for the love of this God. Finally, glory to the Divine love, which induced God to become a little child, poor and lowly, to live a hard life, and to die a cruel death, in order to show man the love which He bears him, to gain his love in return. 'In the stable we see power reduced to impotence, and wisdom become mad through excess of love.' We see, in this stable, says St. Laurence Justinian, the power of God, as it were, annihilated; we see God, who is wisdom itself, become as it were a fool through the excess of love which He bears to men.

Arise, all ye nobles and peasants; Mary invites all, rich and poor, just and sinners, to enter the cave of Bethlehem, to adore and to kiss the feet of her new-born Son. Go in, then, all ye devout souls; go and see the Creator of heaven and earth on a little hay, under the form of a little Infant; but so beautiful, that He sheds all around rays of light. Now that He is born, and is lying on the straw, the cave is no longer horrible, but is become a paradise. Let us enter in; let us not be afraid. Jesus is born; He is born for all, for each one who desires Him: "I am the Flower of the field" (as He tells us in the Canticles) "and the Lily of the valley" (Cant. ii. 1). He calls Himself the Lily of the valley, to show us, that as He was born in such great humility, so it is only the humble who find Him; therefore the angel did not go and announce the birth of Jesus Christ to Cæsar or to Herod, but to poor humble shepherds. He also calls Himself the Flower of the field; because He shows Himself forth so as to be seen by all. "I am the Flower of the field;" upon which Cardinal Hugo commenting says, 'because I allow Myself to be found by all.'

Flowers in gardens are shut up and enclosed between walls, nor is every one permitted to come and gather them; whereas the flowers of the field are open to all, and any one who likes may take them: and so does Jesus Christ desire to be accessible to all who desire Him. Let us arise and enter, the door is open; 'There are no satellites,' says St. Peter Chrysologus, 'to say that this is not the time.' Monarchs are shut up in their palaces, and the palaces are surrounded with soldiers: it is not easy to have audiences with princes; those who would speak to them must expect to have their patience tried; they will often be sent away and told to come again,—that this is not the hour of audience. Jesus Christ does not do so; He remains in that cave; and He is there as a little Child, attracting all who come to seek Him: and the cave is open, without guards and without doors; so that all may go in when they please to seek Him and speak to Him; and even to embrace this Infant King, if they love Him and desire Him.

Let every soul, then, enter in. Behold and see that tender Infant, who is weeping as He lies in the manger on that miserable straw. See how beautiful He is; look at the light which He sends forth, and the love which He breathes; those eyes send out arrows, which wound the hearts that desire Him: the very stable, the very straw cry out, says St. Bernard, and tell you to love Him who loves you; to love God, who is infinite love; and who came down from heaven, and made Himself a little Child, and became poor, to make you understand the love He bears you, and to gain your love by His sufferings. Come and say to Him: 'Ah, beautiful Infant! tell me whose Child art Thou?' He replies: 'My Mother is this pure and lovely Virgin who is standing by Me.' 'And who is Thy Father?' 'My Father,' He says, 'is God.' How is this? Thou art the Son of God, and art so poor; and why? Who will acknowledge Thee in such a condition? Who will respect Thee? 'No,' replies Jesus, 'holy faith will make known who I am, and will make Me loved by those souls whom I came to redeem and to inflame with My love.' I am not come, says He, to make Myself feared, but to make Myself loved; and therefore I wished to show Myself to you for

the first time as a poor and humble Infant, that, seeing to what My love for you has reduced Me, you might love Me the more. But tell me, my sweet Infant, why dost Thou turn Thine eyes on every side? What art Thou looking for? I hear Thee sigh; tell me, wherefore are these sighs? O God! I hear Thee weep; tell me, wherefore dost Thou weep? Yes, replies Jesus, I turn my eyes around; for I am seeking for some soul that desires Me. I sigh out of desire to see Myself near to a heart that burns for Me, as I burn with love for it. But I weep; and it is because I do not see, or I see but few souls, who seek Me and wish to love Me.

COLLOQUY

During the kissing of the feet of the holy Infant, which is a practice observed in some churches.

Now then, O all ye devout souls, does Jesus invite you to come and kiss His feet this night. The shepherds who came to visit Him in the stable of Bethlehem brought their gifts; you must also bring your gifts. What will you bring Him? Listen to me; the most acceptable present you can bring Him, is that of a contrite and loving heart. Let each one, then, say to Him before he comes: Lord, I should not have dared to approach Thee, seeing myself so deformed by my sins; but since Thou, my Jesus, dost invite me so courteously, and dost call me so lovingly, I will not refuse. After having so many times turned my back upon Thee, I will not add this fresh insult, namely, that of refusing this affectionate, this loving invitation, out of distrust. Say to Him, Thou must know that I am poor, and that I have nothing to give Thee. I have nothing but this heart; this I now offer to Thee. It is true that this my heart offended Thee at one time; but now it is penitent, and I bring it to Thee penitent. Yes, O Infant, I repent of having offended Thee. I confess that I have been a traitor, cruel and ungrateful; that it is I who have caused Thee to suffer so much, and who have made Thee shed so many tears in the stable of Bethlehem; but Thy tears are my hope. I am a sinner, it is true, and I do not deserve to be pardoned; but I come before Thee, who, being God,

hast become a little Child to obtain pardon for me. Eternal Father, if I merit hell, look at the tears of Thy innocent Son; they invoke Thy pardon in my behalf. Thou dost deny nothing to the prayers of Thy Son. Listen to Him, then, now that He asks Thee to pardon me on this night,—the night of joy, the night of salvation, the night of pardon. Ah, my Infant Jesus, I hope for pardon from Thee; but the forgiveness of my sins alone is not sufficient for me. On this night Thou dost grant great spiritual graces; I also desire that Thou shouldest bestow a great grace on me,—it is, the grace to love Thee. Now that I am about to approach Thy feet, inflame me wholly with Thy holy love, and bind me to Thee; but bind me so effectually, that I may never more be separated from Thee. I love Thee, O my God, who didst become a little Child for my sake: but I love Thee very little; I desire to love Thee very much, and Thou hast to enable me to do it. I come, then, to kiss Thy feet, and I offer Thee my heart; I leave it in Thy hands; I will have it no longer; do Thou change it, and keep it for ever: do not give it back to me again; for if Thou dost, I fear lest it should betray Thee afresh.

Most holy Mary, you who are the Mother of this great Son, but who are also my Mother, it is to you that I consecrate my poor heart: present it to Jesus; and He will not refuse to receive it, when presented by you. Do you, then, present it, and beg Him to accept it.

Discourse XI.

ON THE NAME OF JESUS.

"His Name was called Jesus." *St. Luke* ii. 21.

This great Name of Jesus was not given by man, but by God Himself: 'The Name of Jesus,' says St. Bernard, was first preordained by God.' It was a new Name: "A new Name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name" (Is. lxii. 2). A new Name, which God alone could give to Him whom He destined for the Saviour of the world. A new and an eternal Name; because, as our salvation was decreed from all eternity, so from all eternity was this Name

given to the Redeemer. Nevertheless this Name was only bestowed on Jesus Christ in this world on the day of His circumcision: "And after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His Name was called Jesus" (St. Luke ii. 21). The Eternal Father wished at that time to reward the humility of His Son by giving Him so honourable a Name. Yes, while Jesus humbles Himself, submitting in His circumcision to be branded with the mark of a sinner, it is just that His Father should honour Him by giving Him a Name that exceeds the dignity and sublimity of any other Name: "God hath given Him a Name which is above all names" (Phil. ii. 9). And He commands that this Name should be adored by the angels, by men, and by devils: "That in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth" (Ibid.). If, then, all creatures are to adore this great Name, still more ought we sinners to adore it, since it was in our behalf that this Name of Jesus, which signifies Saviour, was given to Him; and for this end also He came down from heaven, namely, to save sinners: 'For us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven, and was made man.' We ought to adore Him, and at the same time to thank God who has given Him this Name for our good; for it is this Name that consoles us, defends us, and makes us burn with love. These will form the three points of our discourse. Let us consider them; but first let us beg for light from Jesus and Mary.

In the first place, the Name of Jesus consoles us; for when we invoke Jesus, we find relief in all our afflictions. When we have recourse to Jesus, He wishes to console us, because He loves us; and He can do so, because He is not only man, but He is also the Omnipotent God; otherwise He could not properly have this great Name of Saviour. The Name of Jesus signifies that the bearer of it is of an infinite power, infinite wisdom, and infinite love; so that if Jesus Christ had not united in Himself all these perfections, He could not have saved us: 'If any one of these,' says St. Bernard, 'had been wanting, Thou couldst not call Thyself Saviour.'[103] Thus, when speaking of the circumcision, the saint says: 'He was circumcised as being the

Son of Abraham, He was called Jesus as being the Son of God.'[104] He is branded as man with the mark of sin, having taken upon Himself the burden of atoning for sinners; and from His very infancy He began to satisfy for their crimes, by suffering and shedding His Blood; but He is called Jesus, He is called the Saviour, inasmuch as He is the Son of God, because to God alone does the office of salvation belong.

The Name of Jesus is said by the Holy Spirit to be like oil poured out: "Thy Name is as oil poured out" (Cant. i. 2). And so indeed it is, says St. Bernard; for as oil serves for light, for food, and for medicine, so especially the Name of Jesus is light: 'it is a light when preached.' And how was it, says the saint, that the light of faith shone forth so suddenly in the world, so that in a short time so many Gentile nations knew the true God, and became His followers, if it was not through hearing the Name of Jesus preached? 'Whence, think you, shone forth in the whole world so bright and so sudden the light of faith, except from the preaching of the Name of Jesus?'[105] Through this Name we have been happily made sons of the true light, that is, sons of the Holy Church; since we were so fortunate as to be born in the bosom of the Roman Church, in Christian and Catholic kingdoms,—a grace which has not been granted to the greater part of men, who are born either amongst idolaters, Mahometans, or heretics. Further, the Name of Jesus is a food that nourishes our souls. 'The thought of it is nourishment.' This Name gives strength to find peace and consolation even in the midst of the miseries and persecutions of this world. The holy Apostles rejoiced when they were ill-treated and reviled, being comforted by the Name of Jesus: "They went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Name of Jesus" (Acts v. 41). It is light, it is food, and it is also medicine to those who invoke it: 'When pronounced, it soothes and anoints.' The holy Abbot says: 'At the rising of the light of this Name, the clouds disperse, the calm returns.' If the soul of any one is afflicted and in trouble, let him pronounce the Name of Jesus, and immediately the tempest will cease

and peace will return. Does any fall into sin? Does he run in despair into the snares of death? Let him invoke the Name of Life, and will he not at once return to life? If any one has been so wretched as to fall into sin, and feels diffident of pardon, let him invoke this Name of Life, and he shall immediately be encouraged to hope for pardon, by calling on Jesus, who for this end was destined by the Father to be our Saviour, namely, to obtain pardon for sinners. Euthymius says, that if when Judas was tempted to despair, he had invoked the Name of Jesus, he would not have given way to the temptation: 'If he had invoked that Name, he would not have perished.'[106] Therefore, he adds, no sinner can perish through desperation, however lost he may be, who invokes His Holy Name, which is one of hope and salvation: 'Despair is far off where this Name is invoked.'

But sinners leave off invoking this saving Name, because they do not wish to be cured of their infirmities. Jesus Christ is ready to heal all our wounds; but if people cherish their wounds, and will not be healed, how can Jesus Christ heal them? The venerable Sister Mary of Jesus Crucified, a Sicilian nun, once saw the Saviour as it seemed in a hospital, going round with medicines in His hand, to cure the sick people who were there; but these miserable people, instead of thanking Him and begging Him to come to them, drove Him away. In like manner do many sinners, after they have of their own free-will poisoned their souls with sin, refuse the gifts of health, that is, the grace offered them by Jesus Christ, and thus remain lost through their infirmities. But, on the other hand, what fear can that sinner have who has recourse to Jesus Christ, since Jesus offers Himself to obtain our pardon from His Father, He having paid the penalty due from us by His death? St. Laurence Justinian says: 'He who had been offended, appointed Himself as intercessor, and Himself paid what was owing to Him.'[107] Therefore, adds the saint, 'if thou art bound down by sickness, if sorrows weary thee, if thou art trembling with fear, invoke the Name of Jesus.' O poor man, whoever thou art, if thou art weighed down by infirmity or by grief and fear, call on Jesus, and He will

console thee. It is enough that we pray to the Father in His Name, and all we ask will be granted to us. This is the promise of Jesus Himself, which He repeated many times, and which cannot fail: "If you ask the Father any thing in My Name, He will give it you" (St. John xvi. 23): ". . . . that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in My Name, He may give it you" (St. John xv. 16).

In the second place, we said that the Name of Jesus defends us. Yes, it defends us against all the deceits and assaults of our enemies. For this reason the Messias was called "the Mighty God;" and His Name was called by the wise man a strong tower: "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower" (Prov. xviii. 10); that we may know that he who avails himself of this powerful Name will not fear all the assaults of hell. St. Paul writes thus: "Christ humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 8). Jesus Christ during His life humbled Himself in obeying His Father, even to die on the cross; which is as much as to say, as St. Anselm remarks, He humbled Himself so much that He could humble Himself no more; and therefore His Divine Father, as a reward for this humility and obedience of His Son, raised Him to such a sublime dignity that He could have no higher: "For which cause God hath given Him a Name which is above all names; that every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth." He has given Him a Name which is so great and powerful, that it is venerated in heaven, on earth, and in hell. A Name powerful in heaven, because it can obtain all graces for us; powerful on earth, because it can save all who invoke it with devotion; powerful in hell, because this Name makes all the devils tremble. These rebel angels tremble at the sound of that most sacred Name, because they remember that Jesus Christ was the Mighty One who destroyed the dominion and power they had before over man. They tremble, says St. Peter Chrysologus, because at that Name they have to adore the whole majesty of God: 'In this Name the whole Majesty of God is adored.'[108] Our Saviour Himself said, that through this powerful Name His disciples should cast out devils: "In My Name they shall cast

out devils" (St. Mark xvi. 17). And, in fact, the Church in her exorcisms always makes use of this Name in driving out the infernal spirits from those who are possessed. And priests who are assisting dying persons call to their aid the Name of Jesus, to deliver them from the assaults of hell, which at that last moment are so terrible.

If we read the life of St. Bernadine of Sienna, we shall see how many sinners the saint converted, how many abuses he put an end to, and how many cities he sanctified, by trying when he preached to induce the people to invoke the Name of Jesus. St. Peter says, that there is no other name given to us by which we can find salvation, but this ever-blessed Name of Jesus: "For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). Jesus is He who has not only saved us once for all, but He continually preserves us from the danger of sin, by His merits, each time we invoke Him with confidence: "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My Name, that will I do" (St. John xiv. 13). In temptations, then, I repeat with St. Laurence Justinian, 'Whether you are tempted by the devil, or are attacked by men, invoke the Name of Jesus.' If the devils and men torment you and urge you to sin, call on Jesus, and you will be delivered; and if temptations do not cease to persecute you, continue to invoke Jesus, and you will never fall. Those who practise this devotion, have experienced that they keep themselves safe, and that they always come off victorious. Let us always add also the name of Mary, which is likewise terrible to hell, and we shall always be secure. 'This short prayer,—Jesus and Mary,—is easy to remember,' says Thomas à Kempis, 'and powerful to protect; is strong enough to deliver us from all the assaults of our enemies.'

In the third place, the Name of Jesus not only consoles us and preserves us from all evil, but it also inflames with holy love all those who pronounce it with devotion. The Name of Jesus, that is, of Saviour, is a Name which expresses in itself love, for it recals to us how much Jesus Christ has done and suffered to save us. 'The Name of Jesus,' says St. Bernard, 'places before thee all that God

has done for the salvation of the human race.' So that a pious author said, with all the affection of his heart, 'O my Jesus, how much did it cost Thee to be Jesus, that is, my Saviour!'

St. Matthew wrote, when speaking of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ: "And they put over His head His cause written: This is Jesus the King of the Jews" (St. Matt. xxvii. 37). The Eternal Father then so ordained that on the Cross on which our Redeemer died should be written: This is Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Pilate wrote this, not that he had judged Him guilty because Jesus Christ took to Himself the title of king; for Pilate made no account of this accusation: and at the same time that he condemned Him he declared Him innocent, and protested that he had no part in His death: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man" (St. Matt. xxvii. 24). Why, then, did he give Him the title of king? He wrote it by the will of God, who thereby wished to say to us men: Do you know why My innocent Son is dying? He is dying because He is your Saviour; this Divine Pastor dies on this infamous tree in order to save you His sheep. Therefore it was said in the sacred Canticles: "His Name is as oil poured out" (i. 1). St. Bernard explains this, saying, 'that is, the effusion of the Divinity.' In the redemption God Himself, out of the love which He bore us, gave Himself and communicated Himself entirely to us: "He hath loved us, and hath delivered Himself for us" (Ephes. v. 2). And, that He might be able to communicate Himself to us, He took upon Himself the burden of suffering the pains due by us: "He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah liii. 4). By this title, says St. Cyril of Alexandria, He desired to cancel the original decree of condemnation which had already been passed against us poor sinners: 'By this title affixed to His cross He blotted out the decree issued against the human race.'[109] According to the word of the apostle, "Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us" (Col. ii. 14). Our loving Redeemer wished to deliver us from the malediction we had deserved, by making Himself the object of the Divine curse in taking all our sins upon Him: "Christ

hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13).

Therefore it is not possible for a soul that is faithful to pronounce the Name of Jesus, and to remember all He has done to save us, and not to be inflamed with love towards One who has loved us so much. 'When I utter the Name of Jesus,' says St. Bernard, 'I see before me a man of meekness, humility, kindness, and mercy, who at the same time is the Almighty God, who heals and strengthens me.' When we say Jesus, we should imagine to ourselves that we see a man, meek, benignant, kind, and full of all virtues; and then we must think that He is our God, who, to cure our wounds, chose to be despised, wounded, and even to die of pure grief on a cross. St. Anselm, therefore, exhorts all who call themselves Christians to cherish the beautiful Name of Jesus, to have it always in their hearts, that it may be their only food, their only consolation: 'Let Jesus be ever in thy heart. Let Him be thy food, thy delight, thy consolation.' Ah, says St. Bernard, it is He alone who experiences it, that can know what sweetness, what a paradise even in this valley of tears, it is truly to love Jesus.

"The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but His lov'd ones know."

Well did St. Rose of Lima know this happiness, from whose mouth came out such a burning flame of love, after she had received the holy communion, that it burnt the hands of those who gave her water (as was the custom) to drink after communion. As also did St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, who, with a crucifix in her hand, cried out burning with love: 'O God of love! O God of love! even mad with love.' And St. Philip Neri, whose ribs were forced out to give room for his heart, which was burning with Divine love, to beat more freely. St. Stanislaus Kostka, who was obliged to have his breast bathed with cold water to mitigate the great ardour with which he was burning for the love of Jesus. St. Francis Xavier, who for the same cause unclosed his bosom, saying, 'Lord, it is enough; no more,' in this way declaring

himself unable to bear the great flame that was burning in his heart.

Let us also try as much as we can to keep Jesus in our hearts by loving Him, and to keep Him on our lips by often calling on Him. St. Paul says that the Name of Jesus cannot be pronounced (that is with devotion) except by the operation of the Holy Spirit: "And no man can say the Lord Jesus, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii. 3). So that the Holy Spirit communicates Himself to all those who devoutly pronounce the Name of Jesus. The Name of Jesus is strange to some, and why is it? Because they love not Jesus. The saints have always on their lips this Name of salvation and love. There is not a page in all the epistles of St. Paul in which he does not name Jesus many times. St. John also names Him often. The blessed Henry Suso, the more to increase his love for this holy Name, one day, with a sharp iron, engraved the Name of Jesus on his bosom over his heart; and being all bathed in his blood, he said, Lord, I desire to write Thy Name on my heart itself, but I cannot; Thou who canst do every thing, imprint, I pray Thee, Thy sweet Name on my heart, so that neither Thy Name nor Thy love may ever be effaced from it. St. Jane of Chantal imprinted the Name of Jesus on her heart with a hot iron. Jesus Christ does not expect so much from us; He is satisfied if we keep Him in our hearts by love, and if we often invoke Him with affection. And as whatever He did and said during His life, He did it all for us, so it is but just that whatever we do, we should do it in the Name of Jesus Christ, and for His love, as St. Paul exhorts us: "All whatsoever you do, in word or in work, all things do ye in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. iii. 17). And if Jesus has died for us, we ought to be ready willingly to give our lives for the Name of Jesus Christ, as the same apostle declared he was ready to do: "For I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die also in Jerusalem, for the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts xxi. 13).

Let us now come to the conclusion. If we are in affliction, let us invoke Jesus, and He will console us. If we are tempted, let us invoke Jesus, and He will give us strength to withstand all our enemies. If, lastly, we are

in aridity, and are cold in Divine love, let us invoke Jesus, and He will inflame our hearts. Happy are they who have this most tender and holy Name always on their lips! A Name of peace, a Name of hope, a Name of salvation, and a Name of love. And oh, happy shall we be if we are fortunate enough to die pronouncing the Name of Jesus! But if we desire to breathe out our last sigh with this sweet Name on our tongue, we must accustom ourselves to repeat it often during our life. Let us also always add the beautiful name of Mary, which is also a name given from heaven, and is a powerful name which makes hell tremble; and is besides a sweet name, in that it reminds us of that Queen, who being the Mother of God, is also our Mother, the Mother of mercy, the Mother of love.

COLLOQUY.

Since, then, O my Jesus, Thou art the Saviour who hast given Thy blood and Thy life for me, I pray Thee to write Thy adorable Name on my poor heart; so that having it always imprinted in my heart by love, I may also have it ever on my lips, by invoking it in all my necessities. If the devil tempts me, Thy Name will give me strength to resist him; if I lose confidence, Thy Name will animate me to hope; if I am in affliction, Thy Name will comfort me, by reminding me of all Thou hast endured for me. If I find myself cold in Thy love, Thy Name will inflame me by reminding me of the love Thou hast shown me. Hitherto I have fallen into so many sins, because I did not call on Thee; from henceforth Thy Name shall be my defence, my refuge, my hope, my only consolation, my only love. Thus do I hope to live, and so do I hope to die, having Thy Name always on my lips. Most holy Virgin, obtain for me the grace of invoking the Name of thy Son Jesus in all my necessities, together with thine own, my Mother Mary; but let me invoke them always with confidence and love, so that I may be able also to say to you as did the devout Alphonsus Rodriguez: 'Jesus and Mary, may I suffer for you; may I die for you; may I be wholly yours, and in nothing my own!' O my beloved Jesus, O Mary, my be-

loved Lady, give me the grace to suffer and to die for your love. I will be no longer mine own, but altogether yours; yours in life, and yours in death, when I hope, by your help to expire saying, Jesus and Mary, help me! Jesus and Mary, I recommend myself to you; Jesus and Mary, I love you, and I give and deliver up to you my whole soul.

EXAMPLES OF THE INFANT JESUS.

Example I.

It is related in the *Flowery Meadow*,[110] that a devout lady wished to know what souls were the dearest to Jesus. One day, whilst she was hearing Mass, at the elevation of the Sacred Host, she saw the Infant Jesus on the altar, and with Him three young virgins. Jesus took the first, and caressed her very much. He went to the second, and having taken her veil off her face, He struck her severely on the cheek, and turned His back upon her; but soon after, seeing the child looking sorrowful, He comforted her with all sorts of kindness. At last He approached the third; He seized her by the arm as if He were angry, struck her, and drove her away from Him; but the more she saw herself ill-used and driven off, the more the little virgin humbled herself and followed Him: and thus the vision ended. This devout woman, remaining in the church with great desire to know what was the meaning of the vision, Jesus appeared to her again, and told her that there are on the earth three sorts of souls that love Him. Some love Him; but their love is so weak, that if they are not coaxed by spiritual pleasures they become uneasy, and are in danger of turning their backs upon Him; and of these the first virgin was a figure. The second represented those souls who love Him with a less feeble love, but who require to be comforted from time to time. The third was a figure of those more courageous souls who, although constantly desolate, and deprived of spiritual consolations, do not cease doing all they can to please their Lord; and these, He said, were the souls in which He took the greatest delight.

Example II.

Father Cagnolio relates from Father Patrignani,[111] that after having committed a great many sins, a certain nun arrived at such an excess of crime, that having one day communicated, she drew from her mouth the sacred particle, placed it in a handkerchief, and afterwards having shut herself up in a cell, she threw the Blessed Sacrament on the ground, and began to trample it under her feet. But lo! she casts her eyes down, and what does she see? she sees the Sacred Host changed into the form of a beautiful Infant, but all bruised and covered with blood, who said to her: 'And what have I done to thee, that thou treatest Me so ill?' Upon which the wretched creature, full of contrition and repentance, threw herself on her knees in tears, and said to Him, 'O my God, dost Thou ask me what Thou hast done to me? Thou hast loved me too much.' The vision disappeared, and the nun changed her whole life, and became a model of penance.

Example III.

It is related in the chronicles of the Cistercians,[112] that a certain monk of Brabant, who was travelling on Christmas night, as he passed through a forest heard a cry as it were of a new-born infant. He approached the place whence he heard the cries, and saw a beautiful infant in the middle of the snow, who was crying and trembling with the cold. Moved to compassion, the monk dismounted immediately from his horse, and approaching the infant, said: 'O my child, how is it that thou art thus abandoned to weep and die in the midst of this snow?' And he heard a voice answer him: 'Alas! how can I help crying, whilst I see Myself thus abandoned by all, and that no one receives Me or has compassion upon Me?' And having said this, He disappeared, giving us to understand that He was our Redeemer, who by this vision meant to reprove the ingratitude of men; who, having seen Him born for their sake in a stable, leave Him to cry there without even pitying Him.

Example IV.

It is related by Bollandius,[113] that the most holy Mary appeared one day to the Blessed Collette, whilst she was praying to her to intercede for sinners, and that she showed her her Infant Son all torn and cut to pieces. 'My daughter,' she said, 'have compassion on me and on my Son; behold how sinners treat Him.'

Example V.

Pelbart relates,[114] that a certain soldier was full of vices; but had a devout wife, who not being able to reform him recommended him at least not to omit saying every day a Hail Mary before some image of our Lady. One day, as he was going to commit sin, he passed by a church, which, by chance, he entered; and seeing an image of our Blessed Lady, he knelt down and said a Hail Mary; and what did he then see? he saw the Infant Jesus in the arms of Mary all covered with bleeding wounds. Upon which he said, 'O God, what barbarian has thus ill-treated this innocent Babe?' 'It is you, sinner,' answered Mary: 'it is you who thus ill-use my Son.' Then, full of contrition, he begged her to obtain for him pardon, calling her Mother of Mercy. She replied, 'You sinners call me Mother of Mercy, but you do not cease to make me a mother of sorrows and of misery.' But the penitent did not lose courage, and continued to pray to Mary to intercede for him. The Blessed Virgin turned to her Son, and asked Him to pardon this sinner. Her Son seemed reluctant to do so; but then Mary said to Him, 'O my Son, I will not leave Thy feet if Thou dost not forgive this afflicted man, who has recommended himself to me.' Then Jesus said to her: 'O my Mother, I never have refused you any thing; do you desire the pardon of this sinner? let him be pardoned; and in token of the pardon which I grant him, I desire that he should come and kiss My wounds.' The sinner went up to the image, drew near, and whilst he was kissing them, the wounds were closed. Immediately on leaving the church, he asked pardon of his wife, and with mutual consent they

both left the world, and became religious in two monasteries, where they ended their lives by a holy death.

Example VI.

It is mentioned in the life of Brother Benedict Lopez that while he remained in the army he led a life stained with sins. One day he entered a church in Travancor, and saw an image of Mary with the Infant Jesus. Our Lord placed before his eyes his abandoned life. At the sight of his sins he almost despaired of pardon; but turning to Mary, with tears in his eyes, he commended himself to her; and he then perceived that the Holy Infant also was weeping, and that His tears were falling on the altar; so much so, that it was observed by others, who hastened to collect them in a cloth. Soon after this, Benedict, full of contrition, forsook the world, and became a brother-coadjutor of the Company of Jesus, where he lived and died with the greatest devotion to the Sacred Infancy of Jesus Christ.

Example VII.

Father Patrignani relates,[115] that there was in Messina a child of noble birth called Dominic Ansalone, who was in the habit of going often to a certain church to visit an image of Mary, who held in her arms the Infant Jesus, of which he became quite enamoured. Now it happened that when Dominic lay at the point of death, he implored his parents with great earnestness to bring the image of the beloved Child into his room. His wishes were satisfied; full of delight, he placed it on his bed, and looking at it in the most loving manner, and now and then turning to the Infant, he said, 'My Jesus, have pity on me!' then turning to the bystanders, 'Behold,' he said, 'behold how beautiful is my little Saviour!' On the last night of his life he called his parents, and in their presence he first said to the Holy Infant, 'My Jesus, I leave Thee my heir!' And then he begged his father and mother to employ a certain small sum of money which he had, in having nine Masses celebrated after his death, and with the rest to make a handsome robe

for his Infant heir. Before he died, he raised his eyes to heaven with a look of joy, and said, 'Oh, how beautiful!—how beautiful is my Lord!' and saying this, he expired.

Example VIII.

It is related in the *Mirror of Examples*,[116] of a certain devout English boy, named Edmund, that being one day in the country with other children, as he was fond of prayer and solitude, he separated himself from them, and walked alone in a meadow, entertaining himself in devout aspirations and affections towards Jesus Christ. Behold, a beautiful Infant appeared to him, and saluted him with, 'God bless you, My dear Edmund!' And then He asked him if he knew who He was? Edmund answered, that he did not. 'What dost thou mean by not knowing Me?' replied the heavenly Infant, 'when I am always at thy side. If, then, thou desirest to know Me, look at My forehead.' Edmund looked, and read on His forehead these words: 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' The Child then added, 'This is My Name; and I desire that in remembrance of the love I bear thee, thou shouldst every night sign thy forehead with this Name, and it shall deliver thee from sudden death; as it will also deliver every one who shall do the same.' Edmund ever after signed himself with the Name of Jesus. On one occasion the devil seized his hands, in order to prevent his doing so; but he conquered him by prayer, and then constrained him to tell him what was the weapon which he most feared; the devil replied, that it was those words with which he signed his forehead.

Example IX.

Father Nadasi relates,[117] that the devotion of sending about the image of the Infant Jesus to the nuns, each one having it one day, having been introduced into a monastery, one of these virgins whose turn it was, after having spent a long time in prayer, at the close of evening took the image and shut it up in a little closet. But she had hardly lain down to sleep when she heard the Holy Infant knocking at the door of the closet; she therefore got out of bed,

and having replaced the image on her little altar, she prayed again for a very long time. She then shut it up again; but the Infant again knocked; again she took it out and prayed. At last, weary with sleep, she went and rested herself on the bed, and slept till day-break; and on awaking, she blessed this night, passed in holy conversation with her Beloved.

Example X.

It is related in the *Dominican Diary* for the 7th October, that when St. Dominic was preaching at Rome, there was there a sinner called the beautiful Catherine. She received a rosary from the hands of the saint, and began to recite it; but she did not leave off her wicked course of life. One day Jesus appeared to her; first, in the shape of a young man, and afterwards the figure changed itself into that of a beautiful Infant, but with a crown of thorns upon His head and a cross on His shoulders, shedding tears from His eyes and blood from His body. He then said to her: It is enough; no more, Catherine; it is enough, do not offend Me any more: see how much thou hast cost Me since I began as an Infant to suffer for thee, and never left off suffering till My death. Catherine thereupon went immediately in search of St. Dominic, confessed to him, and, instructed by him, after having given all she had to the poor, and having shut herself up in a narrow cell, led a life of such fervour, and received such graces from the Lord, that the saint was struck with admiration. And at last, having been visited by most holy Mary, she died a most happy death.

Example XI.

The venerable Sister Jane of Jesus and Mary, a Franciscan, whilst she was one day meditating on the Infant Jesus being persecuted by Herod, heard a great noise as of armed men pursuing some one, and then saw before her a beautiful boy looking much distressed, who seemed to be running away, and who said to her: 'O Jane, help Me and save Me; I am Jesus of Nazareth; I am flying from sinners, who want to take My life away, and persecute Me worse than Herod; do you save Me.'[118]

Example XII.

It is related in the life of Father Zucchi of the Society of Jesus, who was most devout to the Infant Jesus, and whose image he made use of to gain many souls to God, that one day he gave one of these little images to a lady, who, though perfectly innocent and good in her habits, yet was very far from having the idea of becoming a nun. The young lady accepted the gift; but smiling she said to him, What have I to do with this infant? He answered, Nothing, but to put it on the spinette, on which you so frequently play. She did so; and having constantly this image before her eyes, she could not avoid often looking at it, and from looking at it, she began to feel a small touch of devotion. Then she was inflamed with a desire to become better; so that the spinette was rather an occasion to her of prayer than of amusement. At last she resolved to leave the world and become a religious. Then full of joy she went and related to Father Zucchi that the Infant had drawn her to His love; and disengaging her affections from earthly things, had taken entire possession of them Himself. She became a religious, and gave herself up to a life of perfection.

THE WAY OF BETHLEHEM;

OR,

Stations of the Infant Jesus.

It is not certain that this devotion is by St. Alphonsus; but the tradition in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer has always ascribed it to him. It is found in the Italian Directory of the Novices, which was certainly written by the Saint, and has been always used in the novitiate of the Congregation.—*Ed.*

Stations of the Infant Jesus.

V. Incline unto my aid, O God.
R. O Lord, make haste to help me.
Glory be to the Father, &c.

STATION I.

THE SON OF GOD BECOMES AN INFANT.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider how the Son of God, the Infinite Majesty, the Creator of the world, and who has need of no one, became Incarnate to save lost man by His sufferings, and was for nine months enclosed as a little Infant in the most chaste womb of Mary.

AFFECTIONS.

O most amiable Infant Jesus, God and Man, it was Thy burning love for me which urged Thee to do all this. I give Thee thanks; and I beseech Thee, by Thy Incarnation, to give me the grace to correspond to such great goodness.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire to be always faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

STATION II.

JESUS IS BORN AN INFANT.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider how Jesus at His birth has not even a wretched cabin, such as the poorest have; but is born in a cold cavern, and is laid in a manger upon straw.

AFFECTIONS.

O most holy Infant Jesus, I thank Thee for this; and I beseech Thee, by Thy most poor and bitter birth, grant that I may reap the fruits of Thy coming on this earth.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire to be always faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

STATION III.

JESUS IS SUCKLED.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider how God, Majesty itself, who gives food to men and beasts, is born an Infant, and has recourse to Mary for His food; and He, through whom not a sparrow hungers, is fed with a little milk.

AFFECTIONS.

O most lovely Infant, Thou takest milk, to be changed into that Flesh which one day is to be bruised and torn for me. I thank Thee for this goodness; and I beseech Thee by this purest milk, grant me grace to act always with a pure intention of pleasing Thee, even as Thou didst ever act with the sole aim of obtaining my eternal happiness.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire to be always faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

STATION IV.

JESUS IS WRAPPED IN SWADDLING-CLOTHES.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory b. to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider how the Infinite God, whom the heavens cannot contain, made an Infant for us, vouchsafed to be wrapped by Mary in swaddling-clothes, and covered with poor rags. And thus the hands and feet of God by swathing-bands are tied.

AFFECTIONS.

O gentlest Infant, Thou art tied in swathing-bands to deliver my soul from the chains of sin and hell. I thank Thee; grant, by Thy holy humility, that casting away every other bond, I may ever live bound and united to Thee.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire always to be faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

STATION V.

JESUS IS CIRCUMCISED.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider how the Infant Jesus, eight days after His birth, showed Himself to be even then our Saviour, by shedding for us His Divine Blood in the Circumcision.

AFFECTIONS.

O most merciful Infant God, I give Thee thanks; and I beseech Thee, by the pain which Thou didst feel, and by the Blood which Thou didst shed in Thy Circumcision, grant me grace and power to pluck out of my heart, and to cast from it, all earthly affections.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire to be always faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

STATION VI.

JESUS IS ADORED BY THE MAGI.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider how the Infant God is visited and adored by the Magi, who, though Gentiles, were enlightened by faith to acknowledge this Man-God for their Saviour, and offered to Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

AFFECTIONS.

Most adorable Redeemer, I too have received from Thee this great gift of faith. I thank Thee for it; and I beseech Thee, by the glory of this Thy manifestation, grant that, like the Magi, I may correspond and be faithful to Thy grace.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire to be always faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to Thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

STATION VII.

JESUS IS PRESENTED IN THE TEMPLE.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider how the Virgin Mary, forty days after the birth of the Infant Jesus, carries Him in her arms to the Temple, and offering Him to God for us, consents that by His Passion and Death He should become our Redeemer.

AFFECTIONS.

O most loving Infant, for this one end didst Thou deliver Thyself up to death, to bestow on me eternal life. I give Thee thanks, and pray Thee, by this offering of Thyself, to make me constantly ready to mortify and die to myself for the love of Thee.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire to be always faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to Thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

STATION VIII.

JESUS FLEES INTO EGYPT.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider how Herod, fearing that Jesus would deprive him of his kingdom, plans His death; and therefore orders all the children of Bethlehem to be murdered. The most blessed Virgin, warned by an angel, takes the Infant Jesus into Egypt.

AFFECTIONS.

O dearest Infant, what sufferings didst Thou not endure during this journey of a whole month and even longer, and that too in the depth of winter! How often wert Thou drenched with rain and stiffened with the cold! How many nights didst Thou pass in the open air!

I thank Thee; and beseech Thee by Thy flight to give me strength to avoid all the dangers of eternal death.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire to be always faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to Thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

STATION IX.

JESUS WITH HIS HANDS FREED FROM THE SWADDLING-CLOTHES.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider how the Infant Jesus, some months after His birth, is still swathed by the blessed Virgin, though His hands are freed from the swaddling-clothes.

AFFECTIONS.

Most tender Infant, I imagine to myself that first moment when Thou didst join Thy little hands, and lifting up Thy Divine eyes to heaven, didst intercede with the Eternal Father in my behalf. I give Thee thanks; and beseech Thee to grant by the merits of Thy prayer that my prayers may be always pleasing and acceptable in Thy sight.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire to be always faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

STATION X.

JESUS BEGINS TO WALK.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider how the Infant Jesus, now a little older, begins to walk, and plans out in His mind the journeys He would make in the surrounding country of Judæa to preach by His most holy words the way of salvation; and at the same time figures to Himself the road to Calvary, which He would tread in going to die for us.

AFFECTIONS.

O most loving Infant, I thank Thee; and beseech Thee by Thy first steps, grant me grace always to walk in the way which Thou hast pointed out to me.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire to be always faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

STATION XI.

JESUS SLEEPS.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider how the Infant Jesus lies in a poor cradle in the little house of His Mother Mary, and takes His rest; and oftentimes the bare ground serves Him as a bed.

AFFECTIONS.

O most amiable Infant, even while sleeping Thy Heart watches, and Thou wert loving me, and thinking upon me; and Thy Heart was consoled with the good which Thou hadst bestowed, and would bestow upon me. I thank Thee; and pray Thee, by Thy loving slumbers, to give me grace to live for ever in loving Thee, who art the most loving Good.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire to be always faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

STATION XII.

JESUS IN THE FORM OF A FISHER.

O Jesus, born of Virgin bright,
Immortal glory be to Thee;
Praise to the Father infinite,
And Holy Ghost eternally.

CONSIDERATION.

Consider to yourself the Infant Jesus represented in the form of a fisher, holding in His hands a rod, to which is attached the hook, wherewith He will catch the hearts of men. When we think on His beauty, and on the love with which He seeks us, and on all that He has done to allure us to His love, we must needs consecrate our hearts to His service.

AFFECTIONS.

O Divine Infant, I give Thee thanks; and pray Thee by the zeal which Thou hast shown in endeavouring to draw my heart to Thee, give me the grace never to leave Thee more, and grant that, having continual recourse to Thee, I may become one with Thee, and never separate myself from Thee again.

O my sweetest Love, I am sorry that I have offended Thee. I desire to be faithful in Thy service: enkindle in me Thy love; make me chaste and holy.

O Mary, grant that I may belong entirely to thee and to thy Son Jesus.

Hail Mary, &c. Glory be to the Father, &c.

V. Blessed is the womb of the Virgin Mary, which bore the Son of the Eternal Father.

R. And blessed are the breasts which gave suck to Christ our Lord.

O Jesus, ever sweetest Lord,
And ever loving still;
From this dear crib sweet drops of love
Into my heart distil.

PRAYER.

I offer and present unto Thee, O most sweet Infant Jesus, the steps which I have made to venerate the mysteries of Thy Infancy, and the homage which I have paid Thee.

I pray Thee graciously to accept it, and to reward me with the virtues of childhood,—chastity, humility, and simplicity.

It is a joy and consolation to me, when I behold Thee on the altar, surrounded with so many and such lovely flowers. I ardently desire and wish to see my heart in like manner adorned with the flowers of all holy virtues, that Thou mayest find Thy pleasure, and dwell in it; and may it be my lot to live in this world ever united to Thee, that, one with Thee, I may dwell in Thy presence in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

THE AUTHOR'S PROTEST.

In obedience to the decrees of Urban VIII., I declare that I have no intention of attributing any other than a purely human authority to the miracles, revelations, favours, and particular cases recorded in this book ; and the same as regards the titles of saints and blessed, applied to servants of God not yet canonised, except in those cases which have been confirmed by the Holy Roman Catholic Church and the Apostolic See, of which I declare myself to be an obedient son ; and therefore I submit myself, and all that I have written in this book, to her judgment.

APPENDIX.

*The sign * is prefixed in the instances in which the Editor was unable to procure the authors, or to find the passages, referred to.*

1. S. Thom. p. 3, q. 46, a. 6, ad 4.
2. S. Bern. Sienn. t. ii. serm. 56, de Pass. Christ. art. 1, c. 1.
3.*Psalter. B. Alani, p. 11, c. 12.
4. S. Thom. ut sup.
5.*S. Buonavent. Stim. Amor. c. 2.
6.*In vitâ, lib. ii. c. 29.
7. S. Bern. Serm. i. in Nat. Dom.
8. Id. Serm. iii. in Circumc.
9. S. Petr. Chrysol. Serm. clviii. Bibl. Max. de la Bigne, t. vii.
10.*B. Simon de Cassia, de gest. Chr. lib. xiii. c. 26.
11.*S. Aug. Tract. xxv. in Joann.
12.* Id. id. xxii.
13. S. Bern. Serm. xlviii. 3, in Cantic.
14. S. Laurent. Justin. Lignum Vitæ, t. 1, c. 6.
15. Vita e Ratti S.M. Magd. Pazzi, p iv. c. 1, p. 525.
16. S. Bern. Serm. iii. in Nat. Dom.
17.*S. Thom. Opusc. lxvii. c. 7.
18.*S. Greg. Nazianz. Epist. viii.
19. S. Bern. Serm. i. in Annunc. B. M.V.
20. Id. Serm. i. in Nat. Dom.
21. Id. Serm. i. in Epiph. Dom.
22. S. Fulgentius, Serm. de dup. Nat. Christi, Bibl. Max. t. ix.
23.*Hugo de S. Vict. in Lib. Sent.
24. S. Leo, Serm. iv. in Nat., Bibl. Max. t. vii.
25. S. Thom. 3 p. q. 32, a. 1, concl.
26. S. Aug. de Catechiz. rud. c. iv. 7.
27. S. Laur. Justin. de casto connub. verb. et anim. c. xxiii.
28. S. Chrysost. Hom. v. in Epist. ad Heb.
29.*S. Petr. Chrysol. Serm. lviii.
30.*Riccard. de S. Vict.
31. S. Petr. Damian. Serm. i. de Nat. The passage does not occur; but in the Sermon de S. Steph. Protomart. the following passage would seem to have been in the mind of S. Alphonsus: "Videte miraculum Matris Domini, creatura erat, et Creator creatur." Tom. ii. Bassani, 1783.
32.*In vitâ, lib. iii. c. 1.
33.*S. Aug. Confess. lib. — c. vi.
34. S. Bern. Serm. lxxxiii. in Cantic.
35. S. Ambros. in Luc. lib. ii. c. 2, v. 6, 7.
36. S. Petr. Chrysol. Serm. cxlvii. de Incarn. Sacrament.
37.*S. Cyril. Alex.
38. S. Chrysost. Hom. in loc. cit.
39. S. Peter Chrysol. Serm. clviii.
40. S. Bern. Serm. xlviii. in Cantic. 3.
41. Id. Serm. i. in Nat. Dom.
42. S. Petr. Dam. Serm. xliv. de Nat. B.M.V.
43. S. Germanus. Serm. ii. in Dormit. B M.V., Bibl. Max. t. xiii. f. 68.
44. Ven. Beda in Luc. c. 2.
45. S. Basil. Constitut. Monast. cap. iv. 6.
46.*S. Greg. Nyss. t. ii. c. 7.
47. Offic. Sab. Sanct. Benedic. Cer. Pasch.
48. S. Leo. Serm. i. de Ascens.
49. S. Anselm. de Med. Red. Hom. c. 3.
50. S. Chrysost. Hom. xxvii. al. xxvi. in Joann.
51. S. Bern. Serm. lxiv. in Cantic.
52. Salvian. de Gubern. Dei, lib. iv. Bibl. Max. t. viii. f. 355, a.
53. S. Greg. Nazianz. Orat. prim. Apologet. f. 9, 96, ed. Lat. Antw. 1612.
54. S. Germanus, ut sup.
55. S. Aug. Tract. xv. in Joann.
56. Concil. Trident. sess. xiii. c. 2.
57.*S. Thom. Opusc. de Sacram.
58.*Innocent. III. de Myst. Missæ.
59. S. Aug. Serm. cxcvii. ord. vet., in ed. Ben. Serm. xxxvii. 6, app.

60. S. Aug. in Psal. xxxii. Enarr. ii. 4.
61.*S. Fulgentius, Serm. v. de Epiph.
62.*S. Aug. Serm. ccvi. de temp.
63. Id. in Psal. cxix. 5.
64. S. Petr. Chrysol. Serm. xxiii. de terren. curâ despiciendâ.
65. S. Ambros. de Virginitate, lib. unic. c. xvi. 20.
66. S. Chrysost. Comment. in Ep. ad Gal. cap. ii. 8.
67. S. Bern. Serm. iii. de Circumc.
68.*S. Thom. Opusc. lxxv.? c. 2.
69. Corn. à Lap. in loc. cit. Is.
70.*Origen. Hom. xxiv.
71. S. Thom. Quodlib. ii. a. 2.
72. S. Bern. Hom. ii. Sup. Miss.
73. S. Aug. Serm. clxxxviii. de temp. in Nat. Dom. iv. i.
74.*S. Zeno, Serm. de laud. Pass.
75. S. Aug. Serm. ix. de temp. ord. vet., ed. Ben. Serm. cxix. in Nat. Dom. app.
76. Id. Serm. xix. de Sanct. ord. vet., ed. Ben. Serm. ccxlvii. app.
77. Id. Serm. lxxxviii. de Verb. Dom.
78. S. Bern. Serm. xx. in Cantic.
79.*S. Laur. Justin de triumph. caritat. cap. x.
80.*Dragone de Pass.
81.*B. Eutic. in vita S. Theophylact.
82. Vita e Ratti S. M.M. Pazzi, p. 1, cap. 116.
83. S. Bern. Serm. i. in Vig. Nat. Dom.
84.*S. Petr. Dam. lib. vi. c. 18.
85. Ludolph of Saxony, Vita Christ. p. 1, c. 13.
86. S. Cyprian. Serm. i. de Nat. Christ. The author of this treatise is Arnoldus Carnotensis, found at the end of the works of S. Cyprian. Oxf. ed. 1782.
87. S. Jerome, Epist. v. ad Heliod.
88. S. Petr. Dam. Serm. lxi.
89. S. Bern. Serm. iv. in Vig. Nat. Dom.
90.*Gulielmus, Abb. in Cantic. iii.
91.*S. Ambros. in Psal. cxviii. Serm. 7.
92. S. Leo. Serm. iv. in Quadrag.
93. S. Bern. Serm. iii. in Vig. Nat. Dom.
94. S. Aug. de Symb. ad Catechum. lib. ii. c. 5.
95. S. Thom. de Villanov. Serm. in Transfig. Dom.
96. S. Bern. Serm. lxiv. in Cantic.
97.*S. Greg. Naz. lib. ii. de Incarn. Hom. ix.
98.*Riccard. de S. Vict. de Incarn. cap. viii.
99. S. Aug. in Psal. xviii. Enarr. ii. n. 15.
100. S. Hilar. de Trinit. lib. ii. 5.
101. P. Patrigani, La santa Infanzia, Mist. terz. Consid. xi. 2, t. ii.
102. S. Brigitt. Revel. de vita et pass. J. C. cap. v.
103. S. Bern. Serm. ii. in Circumc.
104. Id. i.
105. Id. xv. in Cantic.
106.*Euthymius in S. Matt. c. 27.
107. S. Laur. Justin. Serm. in Nat. Dom. t. ii.
108. S. Petr. Chrysol. Serm. cxliv.
109.*S. Cyril. Alex. lib. xii. in Joann.
110. Prato Fiorito, cap. xl.
111.*Patrignani, Corona d'Esempi, iv. Esemp. xiii. t. iv.
112.*Chronic. Cisterc. die 24 Dec.
113. Bollandius, Acta SS. die 6 Mart. in vita B. Coletæ, c. x. 84.
114.*Pelbartus, Stellarium, lib. xii. c. 7, p. ult.
115. Patrignani, Coron. i. Esemp. xi.
116. Specul. Exempl. Distinct. viii.
117.*Nadasi, Hebdom. 16, pueri Jesu.
118.*Ap. P. Genovev. Serm. Dol. di Maria.

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The Sovereign Pontiff therefore with great pleasure encourages you in your course by this letter, and returns you his thanks for the gift, which you offer.

I am moreover ordered to transmit a gold medal which the same benign Pontiff sends, impressed with his august effigy, and with it, as a pledge of his paternal and especial affection towards you, his Apostolic blessing, which as an auspice of all heavenly good, he lovingly grants you with the most sincere affection of his heart.

I have only to profess my respects to you, Gentlemen, on whom I earnestly implore all that is saving and propitious from our Lord.

Gentlemen,

Your most humble and obedient Servant,

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